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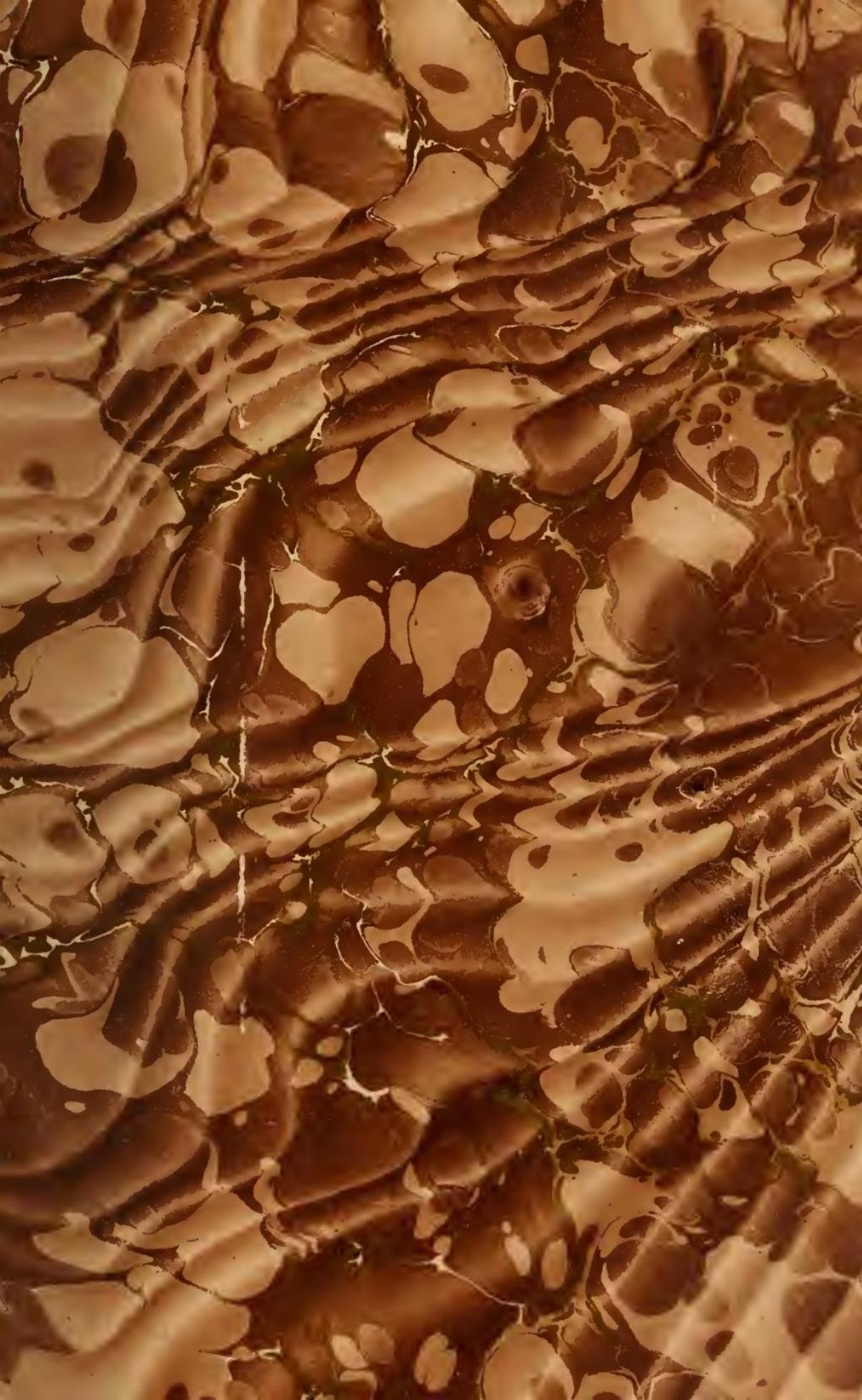
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THE
CHAMPION OF CYRUS:
A DRAMA,

IN FIVE ACTS:

BY

LUKE BOOKER, LL. D.—F. R. S. L. &c.

Fallitur egregio quisquis sub Principe credit
Servitium. Nunquam Libertas gratior extat
Quam sub Rege pio. *Claudian.*

Dudley,
Printed and sold at the Office of the late J. Hinton,
FOR MESSRS. SIMPKIN AND MARSHALL, LONDON.
1831.

representations, when divested of every thing that might awaken censure, will justify my choice, to a discerning Public. May that Public approve the performance, as it will appreciate these stated Motives ! and may the pages be deemed worthy “a local habitation” within the walls of your princely Mansion at Stoke Edith ! the abode of Hospitality, seated amid woods, and plains, and happy cottages ; where Nature seems delighted to lavish her charms, as profusely as the revered Possessor of the Scene dispenses his bounty. That you may long have the felicity of doing so, is the sincere wish of, dear Sir,

Your respectful Servant,

LUKE BOOKER.

DUDLEY VICARAGE,
January 1, 1831.

PREFATORY OBSERVATIONS.

ALTHOUGH the author's name has been honoured with no inconsiderable portion of public approval for literary productions of various kinds, he thinks it right to say, that the present Drama is the first effort of his Muse, in this species of composition. Whether it will also be the last, an enlightened Public will determine.

It is right also that he state, by what Motives he has been stimulated to the effort: if effort *that* may be called, which was rather a pleasurable relaxation from more arduous studies: so pleasurable, that, during a few hours' walking exercise in the lovely scenes of Nature, he has often deposited in the cells of Memory, for transcription, from one to three hundred verses of the present performance. This was done, after a lapse of years; first, in compliance with the suggestion of a no less competent dramatic Judge, than the late J. P. Kemble, Esq.; to whose perusal, the first Scene of the Play was submitted by the author's Friend, the late Miles Peter Andrews, Esq. M. P. for Bewdley. The latter Gentleman being pleased with it, asked permission to show the MS. to Mr. Kemble; who returned it to Mr. Andrews, with this flattering commendation: "Tell your friend, that if he will give continuity to the Scene, by extending it into a regular Drama, I will not only introduce it upon the Stage; but shall be happy to sustain a Character in it."

Notwithstanding the brief MS. with such an encouraging Opinion, was communicated to the author, he did not feel disposed *then* to proceed farther: nor would he since have done so, did he not think—that at a time, when a gloomy spirit is pervading the country, not only diminishing the stock of harmless enjoyments, but engendering a morbid taste, detrimental also to elegant literature—a Drama might be constructed, though not professedly of a sacred character, against which, Fanaticism itself should have no just cause to allege any objection. That there are not *already* such in existence, the present author by no means affirms. But, when he affirms this, he confesses there *are* dramatic works which have a direct tendency to demoralize mankind: and these demoralizing works have been produced at an era when mankind might be supposed incapable of hailing the bane with applause: thus enabling it to do more extensive mischief.—Two dramas, of this kind, were, some years ago, anathematized by the present writer, in these lines; nor has he since had any reason to change his opinion:

“ What marvel that is sear’d the public mind ?
 That Beauty’s cheek no soft suffusion knows,
 Resulting from the soul ? for, unconfin’d,
 The tide of Vice—a wasting deluge ! flows.—
 From prostituted Good the Evil grows :
 Lo ! teeming from the Press deistic lore,
 Exotic in its birth, pollutes the British shore.

Imported thus, more wide the *Scenic stage*
 Spreads the corrupting curse, the moral bane,
Embodying Vice to view, the more to’ engage
 Incautious Youth, and blanch Seduction’s stain
 With winning guise. *There*, see a specious train
 Attend the Libertine or Harlot vile,
 To sap connubial faith, and Virtue to beguile.”

These lines point whatever of severity may be in them, against two of the most popular Plays on the British Stage—“The School for Scandal,” and “The Stranger.”

On these dramas, which Fashion, Vice and Folly have chosen to honour, were not a Critique here out of place, the charge of their delinquency should be substantiated.—The prominent character in each of them is calculated to do more mischief,—and *has* done more mischief to public morals, by the *specious amiabilities* with which both characters are invested, than perhaps all the other objectionable Plays on the Stage.—That one of the pieces should be written, or imported from the German School, by a Clergyman, is to be lamented: and, perhaps, he lived to lament it himself, as a circumstance, for which the highest and most exemplary clerical attainments were afterwards found insufficient to atone.—Respecting the other piece, a late learned Prelate,* who was an ornament to Religion, and to human nature, shall speak.—Alluding to such a character as the one that constitutes the hero of that piece, he says, “the very liberality and good nature of such a person only serve to render him the more hurtful. They throw a lustre over the criminal part of his character, and render him an object of admiration to the crowd of servile imitators, who, not having the sense to separate his vices from his accomplishments, form their conduct upon his example in the gross; and hope to become equally agreeable by being equally wicked.—And, as if it were not enough to have these patterns before our eyes in real life, they are served up to us in the productions of some modern writers, who, to the fond ambition of what they call copying after nature, sacrifice the interests of Virtue; and lend a willing hand towards finishing the corruption of manners. Hence it is, that in several of our

* Dr. Beilby Porteus, Bishop of London.

most popular works of Fancy and Amusement, the principal Figure of the Piece is some professed Libertine, who because he has a captivating address, and a certain amiable Generosity of disposition, has the privilege of committing whatever irregularities he thinks fit; and of excusing them, as the unavoidable effects of constitution, and the little foibles of a heart intrinsically good. Thus, while he delights the imagination, and wins the affections, he never fails, at the same time, to corrupt principles: and young people, more especially, instead of being inspired with a just detestation of Vice, are furnished with *apologies* for it, which they never forget; and are even taught to consider it as a necessary part of an accomplished character.” SERMON vi. Vol. 2.

Many as are the redeeming qualities of this piece,—such as its keen sarcasms upon abominable Slander, and its just exposure of sanctimonious Hypocrisy—neither these, nor all the Cayenne Wit and Attic Salt with which it is seasoned, will render it other than “a fœtid carcase,”—offensive to Morality, and detrimental to Religion.

Although, therefore, a Lord Chamberlain may not deem it expedient to exclude such productions from his licentiate indulgence, a discreet Manager *should*: and, if he consult his own Interest, a discreet Manager *will*. Knowing that there are many who deery the Drama, on account of impurities which spotted it, in an age less fastidious than the present, he ought not to tolerate any thing, of modern growth, that has an impure tendency.

Thus he ought to act, upon moral considerations, independently of interested ones, that modern Fastidiousness may have no pretext to keep aloof from the Theatre, nor justly restrain a Wife, a Sister, or a Daughter from going thither. Nay, he should proceed still farther. From dramatic produc-

tions, of more ancient growth,—even from those of our imitable Shakespeare, he should expunge, in the representation, every demoralizing passage,—every indelicate word ; nor allow any thing to be uttered on his Stage, which a Husband, a Brother, and a Father would think it wrong to speak in the bosom of their family.

Under such Regulations, which Licentiousness alone can condemn, the Drama would become the handmaid of Religion, and, in one respect, possess an advantage over the teachers of Religion themselves,—the *manifest* advantage of *personating Character*; of making Virtue stand confessed in her own image, with all her loveliness about her ; and of exposing Vice, in all its horrible deformities, haunted and chastised, as by real fiends and furies.

In the present performance, its author does not presume to say that, in so high and meritorious an aim, he has succeeded : the Public, on that point will pronounce its own judgments. Yet, so long as Patriotism, Loyalty, and Valour shall be held in estimation,—the amiable Charities of domestic life be revered, and Beautiful Nature awaken pleasurable emotion in the mind ;—nay, so long as virtuous Principle shall be applauded by the wise and good,—and whatever is base shall be reprobated by them,—he will not tremble at the verdict which may be pronounced on this work.

That difficulties, and those of no common kind, obstruct *Perfection* in such performances, must be acknowledged : the author means difficulties with respect to a rigid observance of the great Stagyrite's stipulations for a faultless Drama. At least, every *candid* person will admit these difficulties, after reading the following Sentiments of Dryden, on the subject.—Alluding to dramatic Poësy, and to what both Aristotle and Horace have written concerning it—that more

modern Master-Spirit says, “ What the French call, *des trois Unitez*, or the three Unities, ought to be observed in every regular Play ; namely, Time, Place, and Action. The Unity of *Time* they comprehend in twenty-four hours,—the compass of a natural Day ; or as near it as can be contrived : and the Reason of it is obvious to every one, that the Time of the feigned Action, or Fable of the Play, should be proportional, as near as can be, to the duration of that time in which it is represented : since all Plays, being acted in a space of time, much within the compass of twenty-four hours, *that Play* is to be thought the *nearest* imitation of Nature, whose Plot or Action is confined *within* that time.—It is also the poet’s duty to take care that no Act be imagined to *exceed* the Time during which it is represented on the Stage ; nor any Interval between the Acts, be supposed too long for what is to follow.”

Such is the opinion of this great Patron of the Drama, with respect to *one* of the three Essentials to constitute a perfect Play, *Time*. Respecting the second,—*Place*—he says, “ The Scene ought to be continued, through the Play, where it was laid in the beginning. For, the Stage, on which it is represented, being but *one* and the *same* place, it were unnatural to conceive it *many*, and those far distant from each other.”—Respecting the third Essential—*Action*, he says, “ the poet should aim at one that is great and complete : to the carrying on of which, all things, in his play,—even the very obstacles, are to be subservient. Yet this cannot be brought to pass, but by many other imperfect Actions which conduce to it, and hold the audience in a delightful suspense of what will be.

“ If, by these Rules,” says he, we were to judge our modern Plays, ’tis probable that few of them would endure the trial. That which should be the business of a Day, takes up, in some of them, an Age. Instead of one Action, they are the Epitomes of a man’s Life ; and, for one

Spot* of ground (which the Stage should represent) we are sometimes in more Countries than the Map can shew us."

If the present Play, however, be tried according to this severe—classical Ordeal—whatever may be its other Imperfections—a violation of these stipulated Essentials will not be found among the number. † Wherefore, possessing, as it does, *the Unities*, its author, with more confidence, proceeds to say a few words on its *Subject*. *That* is his own. Cyrus has been made its Foundation, with no other view than to use, *magni nominis sub umbra*, a few Incidents, reputed to belong to his history. Whether those Incidents have Truth or no for their sanction, is not of much consequence. On that head, Herodotus and Xenophon are at variance: nor is the author of the drama, in any way concerned to enquire which of them is right.—Of that extraordinary man,—most justly denominated “Great,” it may be said, without any profane application of language, that he is “as unknown, and yet well-known.”—*Extraordinary* he was, having been foretold centuries antecedently to his birth: and “Great” he proved himself to be by his Actions. The word *foretold*, implies that he had something of sacredness about his character or destination: and that this was really the case, any one may be convinced, by advertiring to those passages in the sacred volume, which are referred to below.‡ Yet *that* part of his character is left untouched, in the present work,

* The Spot, or its *immediate Vicinity* must here be meant; otherwise striking and beautiful scenic changes would be introduced to no purpose: such, for instance, as are required in this drama.

† Of the anachronisms, consisting of allusions to the telescope, and Magnet, in Scene the 2nd of the 3d Act, and in Scene the 3d of the 4th Act, the author was well aware, when he wrote them. He trusts, for the sake of the illustrations they afford, they will be pardoned.

‡ 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23. Ezra, i. 1, 2,—iv. 5—Isaiah xli. 2. et seq. xliv. 28.—xlv, 1, et seq. xlvi. 11.—See also Josephus, Lib. ii. Cap. 2.

for reasons which need not be specified.—Passing over, here, the days of his infancy and early youth, which are slightly noticed in the Drama, his *secular* glories, as the Conqueror of Asia Minor, were briefly these : the most formidable nation of that vast region were the Lydians ; whose king, Crœsus, for the purpose of attacking Cyrus, assembled an army consisting of 480,000 men, near the river Pactolus. The Persian monarch, with an army of 196,000, advanced to meet him ; but, observing how much farther the front of his enemy extended, than his own, he halted, and formed his forces into a solid square. Crœsus, also, ordered his centre to halt, and the two wings to advance, with a view of enclosing the Persians, and then to commence a general attack, on all sides upon them. Xenophon describes the two armies as two immense squares, yet the smaller of the two hemmed in by the larger one. Undismayed, however, by so perilous a situation, Cyrus gave the signal for his troops suddenly to face about, and attack, in flank, those forces which were about to fall upon his rear. This unexpected movement threw that part of the army of Crœsus into disorder : when a squadron of camels advancing against the other wing, which consisted chiefly of cavalry, affrighted the horses by their strange appearance,—unseated the riders, and trod them under foot : at the same time, chariots, armed with scythes, being furiously driven in among them, they were entirely routed.

Having thus thrown his enemy's wings into disorder, Cyrus directed a desperate attack to be made on the centre ; but that bold measure not being attended with the desired success, its failure cost him, in officers and troops, many valuable men ; among whom was his favourite General, Abradates. For awhile, the tide of battle was turned against him, and he himself in imminent danger of being captured or slain,—his horse having sunk under him when surrounded

by his enemies. Then did his army evince its fidelity and attachment. A simultaneous effort of prompt and determined valour rescued him, succeeded by such an extensive slaughter of the enemy, that Victory, at last, assigned her palm in his favour. So rapid was his march of conquest afterwards, that, in the course of two days, he possessed himself of Sardis. Thence he proceeded to besiege Babylon; which he reduced in the extraordinary manner related by historians,—especially by Herodotus. Having settled the civil government of the conquered kingdoms, he reviewed his forces; which amounted to 600,000 foot,—120,000 horse, and 2000 chariots, armed with scythes. With these he extended his dominion over all the nations, to the confines of Æthiopia, and to the red sea. Afterwards, his vast empire, for the most part, continued in peace till his death; which happened about 529 years before the Christian era.

These Particulars are here given to show that no Grandeur of Scenery, or Magnificence of Costume, in the representation of any Drama, connected with that Prince, can be deemed excessive: and no small portion of such Grandeur and Magnificence, Imagination may introduce into the present performance. Were it represented on the Stage, perhaps a curtailment of some of its parts would be necessary; especially in the first Scene of the last Act.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA,

IN THE ORDER OF THEIR APPEARANCE

MEN.

CYRUS, *King of Persia*

ARTAXES, *a favoured kinsman of Cyrus*

COURTIER, *a chief Satrap, in attendance*

AHMED, *a brave and accomplished Soldier*

ABBAS, *a Persian Priest, of high estimation in the Court
of Cyrus*

KERAZMIN, *a Rebel Chief*

SADI, *ditto* *ditto*

HERMIT, *in a bordering Forest*

BANDITI—**1 MIRZA**. **2 ABDALLAH**. **3 HASSAN**

ALLAH, *a chief General under Cyrus*

A SECOND GENERAL, *under ditto*

A CHIEF SENATOR *under ditto*

AZDRIEL, *a powerful Rebel Prince*

ZEB, *a faithful attendant on the Hermit*

WOMEN.

MANDANE

ZULEIKA, *a confidential Lady*

HINDA, *Mother of Mandane*

Commencing time of the Drama, early in the Morning : concluding
Time, soon after Sun-set.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A Tent near a fortified Castle : Cyrus king of Persia, seated on a gorgeous throne, attended by Artaxes and Satraps. Occasion : Artaxes having been overcome, in an equestrian race, by Ahmed, a young private Soldier,—Cyrus perceives his dejection, and thus addresses him :

CYRUS.

FORBEAR repinings, Prince ! another time
Thou may'st contend and win the envied prize.
Remember, thou wert second at the goal :
An honour *that*, amid competitors
So eminent and many. When again
The lists are enter'd, thou may'st be the first.

ARTAXES.

Ah, never Sire ! if the same Youth contend
That was victorious in the race to-day :
And shou'd he *not* contend, say what renown
Wou'd follow conquest ?—How his high-bred
Steed
Obedient to his master's skilful hand,
Flew, swift as light, along the sounding plain !

Still does my mind the graceful Stranger see
 In ev'ry thing.—What native dignity !
 And yet what modesty, did, he display,
 When, conquering me the second time, he bow'd
 Before Mandane ; while her snowy hand
 Braided around his curly-tressed temples
 The laurel-wreath, his Prize !

CYRUS.

Thy praise is generous ;
 And thus in praising him, thou prov'st thyself
 Magnanimous, and amiable as he.
 For, who thus speaks of a victorious rival,
 That, in the field of Glory, has surpass'd him,
 Must have a noble soul : and this inspires,
 My more than wonted love, Artaxes, for thee.
 ——But I wou'd see the youth, who from
 thee won
 The prize ; and, what is more, who from thee wins
 Such admiration.

COURTIER.

That, my liege, thou may'st,
 And instantly : for him, ere while I saw,
 As if unbuoy'd with aught of vanity,
 Fast by the Tent.

CYRUS.

Conduct him in, my lord.—

[*Courtier departs,—and Artaxes seems
 about to retire*]

Say, whither goest thou ?

ARTAXES.

To hide myself behind thee ; lest he see
 My cheek, by shaine, with blushes deep suffus'd
 COURTIER,

(*re-entering, followed by Ahmed; who, wearing the Chaplet, is attired in the plain Uniform of a common Persian Soldier.*)

Lo ! Ahmed, Sire ! I found him with his
 Comrades,

Distributing, in equal shares, among them,
 The hundred golden pieces he had won.

CYRUS. (*to AHMED*)

Was that well done ?—and *wherefore* done ?
 I pray.

The prize *I* gave :—dost thou despise my gift,
 As deem'd a guerdon, all-inadequate
 To thy suppos'd,—thy *self-suppos'd* deservings ?

AHMED.

No, my too-generous liege ! The prize out-went
 My poor deserts. This laurel I retain,

[*modestly taking it from his head, and laying it at the feet of Cyrus*]

And hold it dear ;—so dear,—that, aught besides
 I deem of little worth, For—

[*He stops short*]

CYRUS.

Why that pause ?

Speak freely, Soldier ; nor let modesty
 Frustrate the purpose of thy timid tongue.

AHMED.

For Fame *alone*, great Sire ! I did contend ;
 And that I gain'd : Was it not therefore, just,
 That all *beyond* the prize at which I aim'd,
 My fellow-Soldiers equally shou'd share ?

CYRUS.

Most noble-minded youth ! how widely err
 Those slanderers of mankind, who idly think
 Greatness of soul can only dwell with Grandeur !
 Whereas, like yonder Sun, whose rays benign
 Pervade all nature, throwing into shade
 Our mimic State, true dignity of mind
 Glows in the breasts of millions, who but pant
 For some propitious hour,—some fit occasion
 To summon forth its energies sublime,
 And wake a kingdom's wonder. That bright sun
 Views, in his course diurnal, no thron'd king,
 Boasting a nation bravely-good as mine is,
 If I have *many* Subjects, such as thou.—
 —But I have somewhat, on a minor theme,
 To ask, that passes my credulity ;
 Which, Ahmed, thou wilt answer like a Youth
 That is not marr'd by artful sophistry.—
 Man knows,—or ought to know, as the High
 Priest

Of that Creation, where, o'er creatures dumb
 (Yet gifted with fine instincts) he is placed,
 To minister for their short temp'ral comfort,—
 He knows, I say, that rage-subduing Kindness,

Like oil suffus'd o'er Ocean's foaming billows,
 Will mould, to soft Docility's obedience,
 The fiercest natures.—Soldier ! I am told
 Thou so hast taught and disciplin'd the steed
 Which bore thee on so gallantly to Triumph,
 That he evinces, for thee, such attachment,
 As does the dog,—oft man's most faithful friend,
 For his lov'd master.—Is this rumour truth ?

AHMED.

Most gracious king ! it is : and my success
 Perhaps in the late Contest, at the Circus,
 Was owing to that cause. My gen'rous Steed,
 Accustom'd to my kindness and my bidding,
 Knows what I wish ; and more from Love than
 Fear,

Strains ev'ry sinew of his agile frame
 To give me pleasure. For, what will not Love,
 Even in brutes, perform for those, whose hand
 Is gentle to them ?—'Tis a grievous error,
 Too prevalent in Persia, to account
 (Because impure for food) the noble horse
 An animal degraded. Wiser they,
 Who, for its useful properties, regard
 The willing slave with kindness and compassion.

CYRUS.

Then tell me, tho' thou prize that Wreath so
 highly,
 As aught beside to deem of little worth,

Wou'dst thou the Steed, that bore thee to possess it,
Barter for Gold ?

AHMED.

The Steed, great Prince ! is thine,
As I am : yet, if thy all-potent Word
Dissever our companionship,—*my* joys
And *his* are ended. For, the docile creature,
Instinctively, without Coercion's spur,
Obeys me, as the humble rudder guides
The else-controlless ship. The king's decree,
That may divorce us, would our lot consign
To misery.

CYRUS.

Yet if, Soldier ! not for Gold,—
Wou'dst thou resign him to another's hand
For such a station, in my conquering armies,—
As, more congenial with thy high-born soul,
May thee enable more to serve thy country ?
Wou'd *that* console thy parting ?

AHMED.

No ; nor realms :
Yet, wou'd I to a *Friend*, who knows his worth,
And him wou'd treat with kindness, for my sake,
Without a sigh resign him : if, while Life
Flow thro' these veins, to nerve my arm for battle
In Persia's Cause, I may sometimes caress him.

ARTAXES.

(*rushing from behind the throne, to embrace Ahmed with open arms*)

Then let that friend be *me*, I do conjure thee!—
Embrace,—embrace me, O thou first of men!

AHMED,

How willingly! if thou wert not a Prince:
But, as thou art, I dare not. [Retreating]

ARTAXES.

What! too high for *thee*?

Take half my Province: then we shall be equals.
The gain will all be mine, in gaining Thee.
I do beseech, embrace me.

AHMED, (*continuing to retreat from him*)

I dare not:

For thou art my Commander,—far above me.
Besides—forgive me—to become a prince
I cannot venture, *I*, who find, too oft,
No Ruler in myself, how shou'd I learn
To govern others?

CYRUS, (*starting, in rapture, from his throne*)

Oh, how poor am I!—

Have I, in all my vast and rich dominions,
Enough to recompense so great a Soul?
—Warrior! henceforward, in the field of battle,—
To stimulate or stay,—fight thou beside me.
This, Cyrus, as thy Sov'reign, now ordains:
And, to embrace Artaxes and myself,
Thy king commands.

AHMED,

(falling on one knee, and placing his right hand
on his heart, after embracing, to Cyrus)

True Gratitude is silent.

[to Artaxes, after respectfully embrac-
ing him]

Ingenuous Prince! my warm *Esteem* accept,
Till, of thy *Friendship* I am worthy found.

—Behold the Pledge!

[dividing the *Laurel-Chaplet*]

The half of this be thine!

Thou, nearest me, didst reach the envied goal.

ARTAXES.

Most welcome Pledge from *thee*! From *other*
hands,

Scorn'd as an insult,—as a proffer'd boon
Bestow'd in pity, what I could not win.

—Thus, art thou, every way my Conqueror,—
Turning the passions of my wayward nature
Into the course of Virtue.—Thy Esteem
My bosom treasures, and will ever prize,
More than the smiles and flatteries of the world.
How valued, then, thy Friendship, but withhold,
Till I can win it from thee by such deeds
As dignify mankind, and make them bless'd!
These—having interchange of mind with thee—
Must, as Camelions oft derive their hue
From objects near, soon, by thee, be inspired,
Exalted, *then*, most truly by thy Friendship,

One mighty Soul pervading our two natures,
 Thro' the thick ranks of Persia's foes, our swords,
 Shall, like the bolts of dread Olympian Jove,
 Spread devastation.

CYRUS,

Prince ! thy ready zeal
 Merits applause : but if my earnest prayer
 Ascend high-heaven—soon, soon, wide-wasting
 war,

Follow'd by Widow's shrieks, and Orphans' cries,
 Will cast away her garments, steep'd in blood,
 And cease, by deeds abhor'd of frowning
 Heaven,

To desolate the lovely scenes of Nature !

Oh, were my Power accordant with my Wish,
 For universal Peace ! the' ensanguin'd Sword
 Shou'd soon the rustic ploughshare's form assume :
 The barbed spear, transform'd by smiling Art,
 Wou'd, to the shepherd's gentle hand consign'd,
 Become a crook to guard his fleecy charge :
 The trumpet's clangor, to the lute's soft sound,
 Wou'd yield, thro' all the nations ; and mankind,
 In union sweet, walk down the vale of life,
 As Children of one Father, who delights
 To witness their Felicity,—their Love.

—Haste to the banquet, which awaits our
 presence :

And, happy all, in adding to our train
 This generous youth, *there* fill the goblet high
 For this libation—PEACE TO ALL THE WORLD !

SCENE 2.—A Garden.

Enter Mandane and Zuleika.

MANDANE.

I am not well, Zuleika, and wou'd fain,
 Amid these breathing essences, find health
 For that part, most susceptive of disease,—
 The tender Mind.—Philosophers aver
 There is a property in plants and flowers,
 To cure each corp'ral ill: and if these sages
 Interpret rightly thus great Nature's volume,
 In what concerns the' *ignobler* part of man,
 That will, when death arrests it, fall to dust,—
 I do infer that his immortal part,
 Th' etherial soul,—may be imbued with vigour
 By what may well be term'd the souls of flow'rs,
 Their viewless odours. Like the soul they soothe,
 These, tho' invisible, do prove their being
 To our perceptions, by their secret power.—
 Hence, do I love a Garden, e'en at night:
 And, frequent, here, while, mid her starry train,
 The Moon perambulates, alone I stray.
 My perishable frame, to shield from cold,
 I wrap in ermine; while delighted sense,
 Connected with my immaterial Spirit,
 That is impassive of external ill,
 Revels in ambient fragrance. To my sight
 It is not, yet 'tis there. I feel its presence,

Swaying, so like a deity, my purpose,
 That holy Fear, in thought, as well as act,
 Prevents transgression. It doth seem a part
 Of him who form'd it; whose transpiercing Eye
 All things surveys, yet is himself unseen,
 As is the passing wind. We *hear*,—we *feel*
 That constant Miracle; which yet eludes
 The finest visual sense of earthly Man.
 A Garden is the scene for meditation
 On such high wonders. There, the myriad-tribes
 Of nature breathe a species of dumb worship,
 Which Man might emulate, and find it bliss.

ZULEIKA.

My honour'd Friend! whose gentle soul is pure
 As the sweet tribes thus eulogiz'd so finely,
 And whose diversified rich dyes transcend
 The pomp of princes,—I do much admire
 Thy charming artlessness, concealing art,
 In thus attracting my delighted ear
 To dissertation on the properties
 Of plants and flow'rs; lest I, a *different* theme
 Shou'd start to thine, unwilling to receive it,—
 Of soft impressions, suddenly inspir'd
 By fitful Chance; and which, when dawn'd this
 day,
 Had no existence in thy guileless bosom.—
 Thou hast discours'd of Nature's potency
 In ailments of her children, if applied
 By skill judicious, to their varying cases.

She has a balm, we know, in ev'ry plant,
 For ev'ry malady that wrings the frame
 With mortal anguish : but what anodyne
 Have flow'rs, and all the essences they breathe,
 To yield an unction to the gentle Heart
 That Love has wounded ? Rather will their
 scent,

Delicious tho' it be, *increase* the ailment.
 For, by such sweet delusion do we blend
 All that is precious in creative Fancy,
 That, with whate'er is exquisite in nature
 We do invest the more than mortal image
 Of one we truly love.—If 'tis the Rose
 That sighs its odours as we softly pass it,—
 We straight assimilate the freighted breeze
 To whisper'd accents, at some treasur'd moment,
 Of him we value ; as *he* does the hue
 Of that bright flower, to the ambrosial lip
 Of her he doats on,—If the wanton wind
 Rifle the lily, in its vagrant flight,
 To feast his ravish'd sense,—her snow'y breast,
 He fondly fancies, heav'd with soft emotion,
 Is like that spotless flower.—Then, I conjure
 thee,
 Stay not in such a witching scene as this,
 To be unthrall'd from Love.

MANDANE.

It is not Love,
 Zuleika, that inspired what thou dost smile at,—

My simple lecture, on the floral tribe :
 And yet, so *like Love* is the pang I feel,
 That, tho' unhappy, since I felt its anguish,
 I would not *cease* to feel it.

ZULEIKA.

Lo ! Artaxes.

[*Zuleika retires*]

ARTAXES.

Mandane ! I have sought thee, as the bird
 Seeks *her*, at vernal-tide, whose plighted faith
 Makes all his little labours sweet, while he
 From earliest dawn, to evening's dusky hour,
 Tries his best skill, to form the mossy nest
 That is to lodge and shelter her from cold.

—'Tis true, I sought thee not in scenes like this,
 Resembling thy fair nature. Here, my Love !
 Art thou surrounded by a blooming throng,
 Each vying to possess some charm that lives
 In thee.—But, dear One ! to my anxious
 eye,

That snow-white flower,—[*pointing to a lily*] the
 scepter'd lily, seems,
 Since last I saw thee, to have spread its paleness
 Where, sole, should reign the rose. Say,
 Gentle ! say,
 Is my Heart's empress ill ?

MANDANE.

Too highly paints

'Thy glowing fancy those ephemeral charms,—

If charms they be, which deck Mandane's form ;
And when they fade beneath Time's withering
touch,

Will leave no trace behind, that once they were.
—If these, alone, have won thy pleas'd regard,
I fear it will take wing, as flies the bee
From the declining flow'r.

ARTAXES.

No, my lov'd friend !

When revered Age shall thy now-polish'd brow,
Than Parian marble smoother and more white,
Indent with wrinkles,—turn thy jetty locks,
Which emulate the raven's glossy wing,
To snowy whiteness,—and, from thy soft cheek,
That might 'wake envy in this new-blown rose,
Purloin the blush——then, then, will my warm
Heart

Still closer press thee :—and, when *it* shall cease
To beat with fond and true affection for thee,
May *its* pulsations cease to beat for ever !

MANDANE.

This, Prince ! *is* Love ; the Love, alone, that
Heaven

Will sanction with its smile : because its flame
Lights him who feels it far beyond the bounds
Of days and years, to those transcendent mansions
Where MIND will never die.

ARTAXES.

O matchless Maid !
A Mortal, till this moment, did I deem

The beauteous Object of my youthful passion :
 But, by herself enlightened, now I see
 That the transcendent being whom I love
 Will be my Love for ever.—My Mandane !
 —Oh let me ratify th' eternal bond
 Thou hast unfolded to my mental vision
 With this——[advancing, to salute her]

MANDANE,

(retreating, and giving her hand, with a smile, says)
 Artaxes ! soon enough the morn
 May shine on our espousals, when the pledge,
 Now sought, will be thine undisputed claim.—
 —There,—there, is freely giv'n Mandane's
 hand ;

Nor is her Heart far distant.

[he kisses her hand, in a very impassioned manner]

ARTAXES.

Neither be

The *morn* that keeps me from thy ruby lips !—
 For, Dearest ! e'en within this passing hour,
 When his great heart was open to his kinsman,
 I gain'd the ear of Cyrus ; who, the more
 Pour'd kindness on me, for my late defeat ;
 And, at his royal bidding, that extended
 To whatsoe'er I will'd—I promptly ask'd
 The Monarch's leave to lead thee to the altar.
 Gracious, he said, “To-morrow, if thou wilt,

“ And our fair Guest be willing. Guest?—thou
 know’st,
 “ Named after her to whom I owe my being,
 “ Mandane have I view’d as I do thee,
 “ Somewhat of mine own kindred.—But, Artaxes!
 “ My free consent thou hast to wed the maid,
 “ On this condition—that her gentle hand
 “ In presence of her fond indulgent Mother,
 “ I do present to thine.”—From thee, to her,
 Oh let me instant find my ready way :
 Or, rather, lock’d thy faithful arm in mine,
 Let me go *doubly*-sure of her approval.

MANDANE.

Artaxes! misinterpret not my meaning :
 But lead me not thus sudden to my Mother :
 Nor press compliance, with thy uttered wish,
 To-morrow. Be our bridal day left open !
 I will, in fitting hour, my widow’d parent
 Inform of this concurrence, whose high will
 ’Tis ours and every Subject’s sacred duty,
 To rev’rence and obey.—Another time,—
 Perchance ere Vesper light her brilliant Star,
 We will confer together :—now farewell !

[she departs, somewhat abruptly]

ARTAXES. (alone)

I like not this delay ; nor do I like
 The Vestal-icyness of her demeanor,—
 So ill-assorting with the wonted frankness
 That sway’d, till now, her nature. Yet, methinks

She's faithful. Whence, then, comes the pallid
hue

That now o'erspreads her features? When I last
Beheld her, at the circus,—and how few
The hours, since then, which have abridg'd our
being!—

She blush'd in loveliness. Perhaps she blush'd
The more that eyes unnumber'd were fix'd on
her:

And, as the brightest meteor soonest dies,
Her more than usual beauty blaz'd and vanish'd,
From maiden modesty.—Wou'd it were so!
And yet, methought when Ahmed's manly eye
Met hers,—ere round his temples she entwin'd
The Victor-laurel, that undue emotion
Her look betray'd—and longer did her hand
Rest on his brow, than claim'd the proud occa-
sion.

O doubly-hated conquest! By the Conqueror
To be o'ercome was, to my honest pride,
Disgrace enough! but to behold the prize
At which I aim'd, with all a Lover's ardour,
Placed by *Mandane*, on my Conqueror's brow,—
And that same conqueror perhaps my rival—
Death to my hopes, and honour's just ambition!
But, hitherward, he yonder bends his way,
In converse with the king and few attendants.
—My solitary heart now feels no wish
To join e'en such society.

[he departs dejectedly]

SCENE 3.--A Royal Apartment.

*Enter Cyrus and Ahmed, &c. the latter wearing
in his bosom the Laurel.*

CYRUS. (*to attendants*)

Withdraw;

And tarry near, till we, anon, require
Your ready service.

Soldier! thou art here
By our appointment: for I fain wou'd know
Whence thou dost come; and somewhat of thy
kindred.

AHMED.

Great King! replies to these all-gracious ques-
tions,

It is not mine to give. I am unconscious
Both of my natal place, and of my parents:
Nor do I know that from my mother's breast
I ever drew infantile nutriment;
Or that her smile, soft-blended with my father's,
E'er beam'd upon me.

CYRUS.

Whence, then, were deriv'd
Thy Succour,—and the knowledge of those arts
In which thou dost excel? For, not alone
Is martial science thine, but classic lore
(So are we told) and other rich acquirements,
Which mark the gifted Scholar. I do feel,

Young man ! the deeper interest for *thy* welfare,
 Because, on some points, we are on a level.
 Thou know'st (if not, I tell thee) that like thine,
 On *my* first moments and succeeding years
 Thro' boyhood, up to youth,—no parent's hand
 Sustain'd me,—save that One, whose Care be-
 nignant

Shelters, beneath His wide-embracing arms,
 All His defenceless Children.—Rustic sports,—
 Such as the peasant loves, in life's blithe morn,
 Engag'd my idle, then-untutor'd mind ;
 And rural duties claim'd my riper days,
 Such as might best beseem, what I suppos'd
 Myself to be, an honest Shepherd's Son.
 For I was foster'd by a lowly hind,
 Who had receiv'd, from my unnatural grand-sire,
 Strict orders to destroy me, soon as born.
 But Heav'n, who rules and sways the human
 heart,
 To me all-gracious, and to him all-just,—
 Mov'd the good man to be my kind preserver,
 Exposing, to deceive Astyages,
 (Such my stern grandsire's name) another child,
 Which his connubial mate,—a hapless mother,—
 Had, lifeless, borne to this precarious world.
 The guise humane succeeded ; and thou seest,
 In me, a monument of His kind care
 Which shields the friendless, who no other friend
 Have in the wide creation. Thou thyself,

Perhaps, like me and millions, art His debtor.
 Happy are they who *feel* the debt, and own
 The gracious hand that saves them ! When
 again

We meet in leisure, if our foes permit,
 The pleasing theme may be renew'd. Mean-
 while

Discreetly try to penetrate the cloud,
 In which thy origin and parentage
 Are now envelop'd : for it is my wish
 To serve thee.—Hitherward I see
 Artaxes wending his elastic step,
 As if he sought thee, to confirm the bonds
 Of amity, more kindly-close, between you.—
 Farewell.

[*Ahmed, in silence, bows respectfully,
 while the king departs, and Artaxes
 enters]*]

ARTAXES.

To find thee here, I do rejoice ;
 And in thy converse, Ahmed ! wou'd the time
 Beguile delighted. Yet, my new-found friend,
 I hop'd, instead of thee, to see the king ;
 Whose presence, freed from all affairs of state,
 I covet greatly.

AHMED.

Scarcely hadst thou come,
 When he departed. Grace so sweetly sits
 On his fine kingly brow, that, *there* a frown

Wou'd not appear, wer't thou to follow him ;
 If what thou wishest appertain to good
 Of thee or others.

ARTAXES.

I believe thou'rt right.

But they who make **Urbanity** the cause
 Of its possessor's cares and interruptions,
 Abuse the attribute they shou'd admire.
 'Tis like presuming on **Eternal Goodness**,
 Because *supremely* good, by act of wrong,—
 Anticipating pardon too securely.

No : thou art now, my friend, in the ascendant ;
 And nought from thee will **Cyrus** deem amiss.
My Star is in the wane. The glow-worm shines
 Like a bright jewel in the ear of **Night**,
 When summer **Zephyr** fans the sleeping **Queen**,
 On her soft emerald couch : but when comes forth
 The lusty **Sun**, to meet his blushing bride,
 Aurora, dight in crimson-tinctur'd sheen,
 The tiny worm's meek splendors fade away,
 And soon are seen no more.

AHMED.

Ingenuous prince !
 Forbear all such allusions, I conjure thee.
 They sink me lower in the estimate
 I form of my poor merits. **Cyrus'** soul,
 Imbued with His benignancy, whose arms
 Embrace all nature, holds not thee the less
 In its esteem, by favouring me. Wide space,

Of gen'rous feeling and paternal love,
 Is *there*, for every warrior in his armies,
 Were each to blazon his particular Name
 By signal valour. *I* have wrought no deeds
 In arms to blazon mine : And *I* would wish
 The monarch's righteous orison were heard
 By Him whom Monarchs serve, That wars
 might cease ;
 And all the num'rous family of man,
 In amity and brotherhood might-walk
 Adown the vale of life, as brethren should,
 From Earth to heav'n.*—But if his foes, per-
 verse,
 Mistake his clemency——Artaxes ! *then*
 This arm will not be idle : nor will thine.—
 —Adieu, my prince ! I keep thee from thy pur-
 pose :
 May its fulfilment crown thy fondest hope !
 Nor must *I* tarry.—When the truly-Great
 But intimate a *wish* that is benignant,
 'Tis Honour's duty to perform the task
That wish implies. Such duty, Sir, is mine.

[*With his hand he salutes Artaxes, and retires*]

ARTAXES. (*solus*)

Somewhat, there seems, most singular in this,
 The king and he, in confidential parley ?

* See page 23.

The *Subject*, as he just avow'd, a wish
 Benignant, from the Sov'reign, to have done
 A task of Duty?—*Kind*, the Royal wish?
 To whom? *Kind*, doubtless, to the ready-doer.
 —Well: it may have no reference to Mandane.
 And yet, the *Prize*,—at least the verdant *portion*
 His hand retain'd when sharing it with me,
 He *still* retains; and wears it in his bosom,
 As 'twere a Token of Mandane's favour.
 —What! *with* the prize, if I should lose *Herself*?
 She, with a woman's fickleness of soul,
 Preferring *him* that is my tried superior,
 In manly exercise and magnaminity?
 For, I do fear, it is not in my Nature
 To bear myself, in Victory's palmy hour,
 As did this Soldier.—Whence has he derived
 His various science, and his noble port?
 For, were he garb'd, as is the humblest peasant,
 The rays of innate greatness would shine through
 The rustic vesture: while,—what are the tests
 Of true nobility adorn him too—
 A copiousness of speech most elegant,
 Yet simply-beautiful, as if his words,
 Were not selections of consummate Art,
 But promptings pure of Nature: and, in mien,
 He scorns embarrassment, e'en mid the blaze
 Of regal grandeur, such as Cyrus throws
 Around him, like yon monarch of the skies,
 That blesses while it shines.—Is he some prince,

Veil'd in disguise, to rob me of my treasure,—
 My lov'd Mandane,—without whose soft smile
 I die, as would the plant without the sun ?
 Or is he some spell'd being, whom 'tis vain
 To thwart by human agency ? Ere long,
 Will I the full reality discover,
 Tho' Ruin blast me.—Who, and what he is,
 Ere day-light close, this anguish'd heart shall
 know.

The king, perchance will at the interview
 I now solicit, ease my anxious mind,
 By some spontaneous and unask'd disclosure.
 If Ahmed be, as late profess'd, my friend,
 I need not, henceforth, dread him as a rival.
 Nor will I wrong Mandane by the thought,
 That she is versatile, or can forget
 Her plighted promise ; and a Stranger's vows
 Prefer to mine.—But I must on, to Cyrus.

*[As he departs at the side whither the
king retired, Ahmed re-enters at the
other]*

AHMED, (*solus*)

Artaxes gone,—and Abbas no where found ;
 I here may commune with my joyous Heart.
 And yet, is Joy the sweet presiding goddess
 That reigns within me ? Honour'd by my
 king,—
 Applauded by a mighty multitude,

And press'd in friendship by a gen'rous prince—
 Ah ! Ahmed, ask thy heart, if these be all
 The trophies thou wou'dst proudly designate
 Thy glories of the day ? Is there not one,
 Who, like the Star that first appears in heav'n
 When day declines, shone fairest of the dames
 That hail'd thy triumph ? She whose gentle
 hand,

Instead of twining round my beating temples
 The verdant prize, fell, trembling, on my shoul-
 der ;

And, resting there awhile,—mine eye survey'd
 A form so lovely, that an anchorite
 Wou'd glow with admiration to behold it ?
 That Constellation of unrivall'd charms—
 First, of her sex, has wak'd a soft emotion,
 I know not what to name. Yet this I know—
 I wou'd expire a thousand deaths to serve her.
 Who is she ? And to whom allied ?—Her name,
 Mandane, speaks her not of Persian race.—
 But was not *that* the name of Her who bore
 The gracious Sov'reign who now deigns to bless
 me ?

It was : and *my* Mandane—MINE ? proud
 thought !

Is one, whose radiant smile of Light divine
 Will ne'er on Ahmed's humble pathway shine,—
 Ahmed, who, till the present fateful hour,
 A stranger was to Fear's disheartening pow'r.

[*The last couplet to be addressed respectfully and feelingly to the audience, as he retires*]

Dispel it, Kindness ! from this anxious breast ;
And bid the Trembler, *here*, subside to rest.

END OF ACT THE FIRST.

ACT 2.**SCENE 1.—Precincts of a Temple.**

Hinda and Abbas.

HINDA.

I am delighted with my Ahmed's triumph ;
 And yet afraid that it shou'd teem with evil,
 Unless some wise precaution be adopted,
 Which I cou'd wish had not now claim'd our
 care.

Thou, who hast kindly, as his guardian-parent,
 Train'd him to virtue—at the recent scene
 Of his proud triumph, wast not a spectator.
 Duties, more suited to thy holy office,
 Detain'd thee in retirement : and my feet
 Wou'd there have linger'd too, had not a wish,—
 So natural to a Mother,—led me forth
 To witness, in my Daughter, all that Grace
 For which she is distinguish'd, when her hand,
 Selected by the Monarch, was to give
 The laurel-prize, and on the victor's brow
 To place the trophy.

ABBAS.

Well, my honour'd Lady !
 What cause in this, to thy maternal breast,
 For apprehended evil ? Did its warm,

Internal impulse, to the throng'd attendants
 Betray the Mother ? And e'en *were* it so,
Mandane would, by ev'ry gen'rous Mind,
 Be deem'd the spring that mov'd thee.—To
 behold

One so belov'd and lovely, by thy side,
 Resembling thee, in ev'ry line and feature,
 So mark'd for proud distinction—*that*, each heart,
 Which beats with honest feeling, wou'd surmise
 To be the Cause of thy undue emotion.
 For, truly thou hast said, Mandane's hand
 Was chosen by her Sov'reign, as the fairest,
 To crown the Victor.

HINDA.

Yes ; but cou'd I think
That Victor was ordain'd to be her *Brother* ?
 Thus overwhelming me with *two-fold* bliss.
 For, all-unknown to me was Ahmed's purpose
 Of blending in the high equestrian List,
His claim to be a bold competitor,
 Till I beheld him 'coutred on the spot,
 And heard his name (that pass'd all other ears,
 As flies the wind along the traceless sand)
 Proclaim'd, among the noblest Youths of Persia,
 A candidate for fame.

ABBAS.

That was, I grant,
 A spirit-stirring circumstance for thee
 To hear,—to know ; and yet, as rests the statue,

Exanimate and moveless on its base,
 For thee to show no soft expressive sign
 That he was of thy blood :—impossible !—
 What kindred fibre wou'd, as if extinct,
 Have slept in those, most *distantly* allied ?
 While, in the Mother,—her, whose *frame* was
 his,—

Whose flesh, and circling fluid that pervades it,
 Were fed and nurtur'd by her fond endurance,—
 Whose womb encradled his unfinish'd limbs,
 Till Nature call'd him forth—for *Her*, I say,
 To witness such a Portion of herself,
 So proudly station'd in the lists of Honour,
 Whom Fate had sever'd from her till that mo-
 ment,

And yet evince no *feeling*——marble rocks
 Wou'd spurn the living thing that shou'd
 reprove her !

—But, pardon me: my speech, obtrusive, broke
 The chain of thy narration, that inspir'd
 A zealous friend's impatience for the sequel.
 Proceed I do intreat thee.

HINDA.

I had said,
 That Ahmed's name had reach'd his mother's ear,
 When gracefully, beside his conscious steed,
 Which ~~loyed~~ him, as the faithful dog his master,
 He walk'd, and strok'd the finely-flowing mane
 That cloth'd its neck of thunder :—then, a pause,

As if all motion had, among the crowd,
 Been stay'd by Miracle, one moment lasted :
 When, the loud signal-trumpets,—brazen-tongued—

Proclaim'd for mounting, to the youthful rivals.
That giv'n—elastic as the forest hart,
 Bounding, he vaulted on his fiery steed,
 That seem'd to wait *him* only, to rush on
 To certain Victory.—Oh! methought, that, *then*,
 I saw his Father's Spirit, on the courser ;
 So like he seem'd in person and in gesture.
 —Firm,—self-possess'd, and govern'd by discretion,—

His Form, so finely moulded,—and his eye,
 Beaming intelligence on all around,—
 While all around were breathless at the starting—
 —Arrang'd abreast, the coursers stood ; if
 standing might be called
 The Station which they spurn'd,—with arched
 necks

Champing, indignant, the restraining bit,
 And raking, with impatient hoof, the ground :—
 When, soon as wav'd the signal in the air,
 Away !—as if but one impelling force
 All influenc'd—all, with simultaneous speed
 Shot forth !—Then, buzzing, intermingling
 sounds,

Rather than voices, were distinctly heard.
 Yet, mid them, loudest questionings mine ear

Caught, from the noble Company about me—
 “ Who is the Youth, that, on the ebon steed,
 “ Seem’d born of air?—for none, before, beheld
 him.

“ Yonder he flies ! and every follower
 “ May catch as soon the light’ning’s flame as
 pass him.

Whence is he ? say ; and what the stranger’s
 name ? ”

—I, my best Friend, alone cou’d have inform’d
 The curious throng : yet *then* my pallid lips
 Were clos’d: but short was agoniz’d Suspense :—
 For, as if rattling thunder had forsook
 The aërial regions,—and along the earth,
 Were rolling nearer, and, with quick’ning speed,
 Still nearer were advancing on the plain,
 Tow’rds our pavilion,—the loud tramp of horses
 Was then tremendous!——“ Ahmed is the first ! ”
 Reiterated soon a thousand voices.

“ He’s won ! he’s won ! ” shouted ten thousand
 more.

Such was the cry below ;—while flocking on,
 As rushes through a mound, disrupted sudden,
 The floods of mighty waters—all the tide
 Of living beings, congregated there,
 Follow’d their favourite Victor to the goal.

ABBAS.

I marvel not, that thou shou’dst much be mov’d :

And, now, I interrupt but thy narration
 A few short moments, that thy beating heart
 May find a respite from its pleas'd exertion.
 The sequel let me hear another time,
 If wearied be my friend in charming me
 With such a picture. That it is not finish'd,
 The event has told me : yet in terms how tame,
 Compar'd with those of the admiring Mother !

HINDA.

Consid'rate Abbas ! I had well-nigh done,
 When, for my weal, thy Friendship interpos'd.—
 —While rung the air with Ahmed's fav'rite
 name,

Repeated by the multitude below,
 " And who *is* Ahmed ?" ask'd the courtly throng,
 Who stood around me. Still my tongue was
 chain'd

In trembling silence ; till the stirring scene,
 Becoming, for a mother, far too potent,
 I sank, o'erpower'd with pleasure ; and was borne
 To the retiring chamber of my Sex,
 Who wish'd repose. Thither a gentle dame,
 Whose heart was tender as her rank was high,
 Soon follow'd me ; and while beside my couch
 Assiduous tending—all compassionate—
 Surmis'd *Mandane*, trembling as the leaf
 Which Zephyr plays with on the aspen-bough,
 To be the cause of my then transient ailment.
 I thank'd her for her gracious Courtesy ;

Which, somewhat, had restor'd me, and, thence
borne,

In privacy to my attending Chariot,
I left the busy scene, ere, from his steed,
To greet, and to be greeted but with smiles,
My Son alighted to receive the Prize,
The royal guerdon of his victory ;
Which by my daughter's hand was to be dealt
him.

For, as unthought-of Joy is oft as fatal
As Sorrow's un-anticipated pang,
I dar'd not trust my agitated heart
With further rapture. Yet, as well thou know'st,
'Tis rapture of despair.

ABBAS.

No more, I pray,
My stricken penitent ! at this bright hour,
Of what disturbs thy peace. We will, anon,
Renew the mournful theme : when (grant it,
Heav'n !)

Thou mayst be profited, and feel the weight,
That now oppresses thee, grown lighter.—
Madam !

It is not that my heart prefers the beam
Of prosp'rous fortune, that I say, farewell
To thee, the troubled Mother, and resort
To thy more-happy Son : for, I wou'd blend
My moments with the wretched, to beguile
The Sufferers of their woe, did such now call me.

My counsel, in thy case, thou know'st ; and
soon

Its truth or worthlessness will find a test.
Meanwhile, my service to thy prosp'rous Son
Is due : for, in Prosperity, our cares,
By those we love, are needed. 'Tis a height,—
A dizzy promontory, upon whose brink
The novice stands in peril, if some hand,
Practis'd and school'd by sage Experience,
Do stay him not, while all around he looks,
At the bright scene, so novel to his view.
So the young Eagle, from his eyry-rock,
Ere plum'd for an excursive flight abroad,
Delighted looks ; and thence wou'd rush to ruin,
Did not the prudent parent-bird restrain :
And so the youth, that has our fondest care,
Untended, may surmise himself beyond
The reach of danger ; and thence topple down
From the proud eminence, where Fame has
placed him,
To rise no more.—Thy pardon, therefore, Lady !
Vouchsafe for thus departing. Yet, ere turn
My footsteps from thee, let my tongue advise
To lock, at present, in thy cautious bosom
The secret from Mandane and her brother,
Of their ill-fated Father, and the cause
Why he has fled, alas ! we know not whither.
The skies are opening,—so my heart wou'd
augur—

With rays of sunshine for thy shaded house :
 And no one will more cordially rejoice
 To see them settle there, than he who leaves thee.

[He bows and retires,—Hinda remaining,—when Zuleika enters.]

HINDA.

Zuleika, thou dost come in wish'd-for time,
 Just when I needed such a faithful stay,
 On whom to rest my heart. For, tho' bright cause
 Have I for thankfulness, from Ahmed's fortune,
 Still is that heart depress'd with anxious fears,
 Lest this event, which does indeed delight me,
 Shou'd, ere I am prepar'd, accelerate,
 To him and to Mandane, the divulging
 Of their—at present unknown kindred ties.
 —How fares my Child? For, since the closing
 hour

When she, as arbitress, adorn'd the circus,
 I have not seen her. *Then*, as well I ween'd,
 She was o'ercome by the august occasion ;
 And quietness, with thee, in her apartment,
 Was her best solace.—Tell me, good Zuleika,
 All that ensued, relating to her conduct.
 Thine eye, I know wou'd scan aright its bearing.

ZULEIKA.

The trying moment, Madame! I remember
 When thou did'st quit the animating scene :
 'Twas just as, from his proudly-conscious steed,
 Thy matchless son dismounted to receive

At thy fair daughter's hand, the ready prize,
 For which, so many had so ardent strove.
 But ere his foot descended to the plain,
 Which, as thou saw'st, his courser in the race
 Scarce ever seem'd to touch, or only touch'd
 By choice,—not from necessity : and when
 Admiring crowds survey'd him, after victory,
 His finely-arched neck the generous creature
 Turn'd tow'rds that stirrup'd foot of his lov'd
 master,

As if to kiss it, ere it left *his* side,
 To mount, invited, the august pavilion,
 Where stood Mandane, radiant but in charms ;
 For her attire was simple as the maid
 That hangs the garland on the shrine of May.
 She stood surrounded by the Dames of Persia,
 As stands the cedar 'mid inferior trees,
 The forest's noblest glory—when her hand
 Wav'd graceful its all-courteous intimation
 For Ahmed to approach.—With modest step,
 He soon advanc'd ; and then, on bended knee,
 Inclin'd before her : when the chaplet-branch
 She, *instant* might have dropt upon his brow,
 And bade him rise the happy conqueror :—
 Yet no : she paus'd ; and while his speaking eye
 Was fix'd on hers, as if to ask the cause
 Of hesitation, I did mark the blush
 Forsake her cheek,—and soon it came again
 With added lustre. Still the wreath she held
 Undesignated, as if all unwilling

To let the object of her envied honours
 Leave her delighted presence : and, at last,
 When she *did* braid it with his curly locks,
 Her slender fingers were 'mid them entangled
 As if by Destiny to keep him hers.

That heighten'd her confusion and her charms.
 I stood close by, admiring ; and methought
 I heard a sigh burst from her heaving bosom :
 While, like a Lily stricken by the storm,
 Her arm fell on his shoulder.

HINDA.

If the act

Were Nature's prompting, from the cordial-tide
 That flows thro' both their frames—all may be
 well.

But if a sudden and erratic passion
 Beguile thy friend, exorcise thou her mind
 Of its delusion,—fraught with deadly ill,
 If undivested of its subtle poison,
 To her's,—to Ahmed's,—and Artaxes' peace.
 —Not easy is thine office ; since no word,
 Nor slightest intimation, to Mandane,
 Must yet escape thy lips, that she and Ahmed
 Are link'd already in those kindred ties
 Which brook not closer.

ZULEIKA.

Madam, I depart
 With hopes to multiply my hours of bliss,
 By adding to the number of thine own.

[*Exeunt unâ.*]

SCENE 2.--Unchanged:

Ahmed entering, as Hinda and Zuleika depart.

AHMED. (*solus*)

Yet unfulfill'd is the urbane request—
Command, it rather should be term'd, of Cyrus,
“ That I would try to penetrate the cloud,
“ In which my origin, and parentage
“ Are now envelop'd.” Abbas have I sought
In vain : and he alone the cloudy veil
Can, for me, draw aside, to let me see
Where *dawn'd* my days, tho' not where I shall
 end them.

—And lo ! he comes.—My scarcely
 utter'd wish
Is gratified, O Sir ! by thy arrival,
At this eventful time :

[affectionately, yet respectfully saluting
 him]

for, such it seems
To me, an orphan,—left in the wide world
All-parentless, tho' not without a Friend,—
Bless'd, as I have been with thy kind protection.

ABBAS.

What wou'd my Son ? Affectionate regard
Thou hast, from Childhood, claim'd by upright
 conduct,—

Gilding thy youthful days with somewhat more
Than Youth is apt to promise: and, since then,—

Between the spring of life, and summer'd term
 Of ripening man, thy acts have, more and more,
 Expanded into virtues. To withhold
 My Love, then, from thee, when 'tis most de-
 served,
 Wou'd brand me with dishonour. Name thy
 wish.

AHMED.

'Tis rather, gen'rous Sir, the wish of one,
 Whose wishes, on each Loyal Subject's heart,
 Are cogent as his Laws. *Those*, to fulfil—
 The Good are anxious, as, by strict observance,
These to obey.

ABBAS.

Thy Sov'reign thou dost mean ;
 Tho', with thy wonted modesty, no breath
 Has syllabled his Name.—Unlike the herd
 Of parasites, on whom, if Greatness smile,
 Can talk of nothing else,—I do remark,
 Thou e'en art silent on the very theme
 That won the smile of Cyrus. But, my Son,
 From other tongues I've heard it ; and I praise
 Thy wisdom, crown'd, as now thou art with
 Victory,
 For wearing her fair coronal so seemly.—
 Who conquers others, may have strength or
 courage
 To be reputed muscular or brave :
 While he who vanquishes, within himself,

In Victory's proud and dazzling hour, Vain-Glory,

Merits the name of Hero.—Such art Thou :
And such, mid greater deeds, wilt thou, my Son !
Continue.—But, the Wish,—the royal wish
Thou spak'st of?—As, 'tis Ahmed ! *thy* desire
To rev'rence it ; so ought it to be *mine*.

For, they who light the Altar's holy flame,
Are bound to breathe their warmest orisons
To that high Throne, whither the flame ascends,
For Him who *guards* the Altar : and, to these,
If added be not true Allegiance,
The aspirations and the Altar's flame
Ascend in vain.—What does the Monarch
wish,

That I or thou can furnish ?—Briefly speak :
For Time now presses on me to depart
For other scenes, which may concern thy weal.

AHMED.

Then, terms more brief, than what my *Sov'reign*
us'd

Cannot be pour'd into thy list'ning ear.

They are thus measur'd : “ Soldier ! thou art here
“ By our appointment : for, I fain wou'd know
“ Whence thou dost come ; and somewhat of thy
kindred.

“ Discreetly try to penetrate the cloud,
“ In which thy origin and parentage
“ Are now envelop'd : for, it is my wish
“ To serve thee.”

ABBAS.

And thou know'st my Son, 'tis mine.
 If more confirmatory proof be wanting,
 Ere long wilt thou receive it from the lips
 Which prompted thy enquiry. 'Tis my purpose,
 Soon as high State-affairs will warrant me,
 To seek the Monarch's presence,—ne'er denied,
 By him, to those who aim at Public Good ;
 Or private blessings, for his Subject-children,
 Wou'd mediate from the Highest King's vice-
 gerent.

That done, he will himself to thee impart
 The knowledge thou requir'st, or sanction me
 To give it.—For the present, let thy heart
 Be satisfied that what it does not know
 Is for its comfort.

AHMED.

Vain were all the lore
 I have from thee deriv'd, if that prime lesson—
Seek not the knowledge that promotes no good—
 Were not impress'd, indelibly-deep,
 On thy young pupil's mind.—Impatient, oft,
 Are mortals to become *unwisely-wise*:
 That is, to know, what, better were conceal'd
 From their perceptions. For, if, being known,
 Wou'd but deduct one atom from their bliss,
 He is their friend who doth forbear divulgence.
 A child wou'd grasp at some bright flickering
 flame,

Which, being seiz'd, would harm it. Is the hand
Of soft Restraint, obtruded by its mother,
Unkind and cruel? No. Her infant's tongue
If nature cou'd miraculously loose it,
Wou'd bless her for the deed.

ABBAS.

Thou reason'st justly :
And thy own axiom, in our future converse,
With Cyrus' acquiescence, shall direct me,
In what I may impart, or withhold from thee.
Farewell!—My Son, be ever what thou art;
And disappointment will not be thy portion.

SCENE 3.—A Garden.

Mandane, beheld alone, binding a climbing flower-plant to
some trellis-work. After a short interval, on the opposite
side, Artaxes, unperceived, enters, admiring her.

ARTAXES.

Again, Mandane mid her floral tribe
Busied, as if they were her blooming children?
Thy training hand is wanted in *that* scene,
Which soon, I trust, will boast thee its fair
mistress;
Where every flow'r is now a living emblem
Of its lone hapless master,—ill at ease.
Some, tempest-beaten, prostrate lie dejected;

While others, intermingling,—wild disorder
 Destroys that harmony which Nature's law
 Bade reign among them.—Nay, my lov'd One !
 more ?

My mansion asks thy sov'reignty, and seems
 A sepulchre without thee. Thy fine taste
 Is waited for, to make it what I wish,—
 Worthy of my Mandane.

[*taking her hand, and tenderly kissing it.*]

I have been

There once again to visit it, with artists
 Of various craft,—well-minded to set all
 In perfect order, meet for thy reception ;
 Yet doubting thine approval, stay'd each hand,
 Till thou shalt say, “ Artaxes ! be *this* so ;
 “ And *this* or *that*, like what I have beheld
 “ In such a palace of our tasteful monarch.”
 Return with me, while smiles the lovely day,
 Attended by Zuleika and thy Mother.
 Then as by quick enchantment, will the work
 Assume completion, just as thou woud'st wish it.

MANDANE.

Alas ! *that* mother, by this morning's effort,
 To see her Daughter in the seat of Honour
 (Not coveted for any vain distinction)
 Has since, in mind and frame, requir'd the balm
 Of kindest Friendship's most discreet attentions :
 And I do fear me that her shatter'd spirits
 Will not regain their wonted happy vigour,

Save by sequester'd Quietness, awhile,
 In still retirement—Thy express'd-desire
 I will impart to her and to Zuleika :
 And, soon as health will, undevoid of danger,
 Permit the visit to thy destin'd mansion,
 Her steps attended shall be by Mandane.

ARTAXES.

My heart's sole Empress ! ask her I entreat thee,
 Whether the soft and balmy air, now breathing,
 Wou'd not, far better than all Medic aid,
 Tend to restore her ? The light palanquin
 (Admitting *that*, all-shelter'd from the Sun)
 With trusty slaves to bear her on their shoulders,—
 Thee seated by her side, and kind Zuleika,
 Instant shall wait her bidding :—for, my Love !
 My life's best treasure ! till I call thee mine,
 That life is misery.

MANDANE.

My impatient Friend !
 Pray moderate thy feelings,—if their force
 Be fervid as are thy too-warm expressions;
 Remember, I am mortal ; and whate'er
 Is kindred with mortality is frail,—
 Far, far indeed from angels' pure perfection.
 I wou'd chastise thy much too-partial thoughts
 Of me, ere I am thine ; lest disappointment
 'Bide in Artaxes' dwelling with Mandane.

ARTAXES.

I wou'd, my Sweet! but find thee what thou
art,—

A guileless, unaffected, lovely Woman.

Long be the time ere thou become an Angel!

Unless to him, who makes thee one, be giv'n
Pow'r to translate Artaxes, too, to Heav'n.

END OF ACT THE SECOND.

ACT 3.--SCENE 1.

A mountainous region : camps in the distance,—with appearances of numerous soldiery,—camels, and elephants, defiling between the passes,—as if repairing to a particular point. These grand demonstrations continue, amid wild vivid scenery in the back ground, while two Chieftains (Kerazmin and Sadi) gorgeously appareled, in a different costume to that of the Satraps of Cyrus, confer together at the lower part of the Stage.

KERAZMIN.

I know the risk is great. So is the boon
At which we aim—**FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE.**

Thou say'st (what I confess) that we are happy :
That if we *are* enchain'd, our chains are easy,
Like wreaths of roses thrown around the necks
Of dancing wassailers, at merry May.
Thou say'st we have sufficiency of wealth
For ev'ry needed purpose : and *that*, too,
I do confess : nay, more, that we, the wealth
(Secur'd to us by salutary Laws)
May use, to purchase any varied good
That plain and unaspiring Virtue pants for.
Thou say'st, too, that we breathe a healthy clime,

Where Plenty's horn, o'erflowing, gladdens us :
 But, prove to me the charm of health and wealth,
 If, while we have the first, we may not bask
 Amid the last, and use it as we will ?
 Say, what is ev'ry boasted privilege,
 If ONE, above us, in the rank of mortals,
 Require this tame submission to his mandate :
 " So far you may pursue your several aims
 " Of self-imagin'd good, as not to trench
 " On what *I* think concerns the general weal."
 Cyrus, forsooth, because he wears a crown,
 And calls himself a king, usurps the right
 To regulate *our* fancies by his own :
 But mine has wings, that will not brook his
 guiding ;
 And *that*, before the moon shall walk the skies,
 To night, his kingship will be made to know.
 Mine be the Freedom of the charter'd Wind,
 That wantons as it pleases——

SADI.

Yes ; to wreck

Some luckless Vessel that has lost its pilot.
 For such, Kerazmin, is the simile
 To which thy own inflated language points,
 Placing, before my mental view, a ship
 Found'ring, all-helpless, in a free-wing'd Storm.
 So, kingless and ungovern'd, were a people :
 Each one, in his own proud imagination,
 As dignified, and fitted to bear rule,

As are the millions round him. Meanwhile they,
Like thronging bees, which leave their straw-
built hive,

To rifle, freely, every honied flower,
Seek casual good diverse : but, all-unlike
That wise community which love their queen,
The ardent lovers of unbounded Freedom,
Instead of seeking profitable sweets—
Accumulated ills,—a frightful store !
Will prove their bitter portion.—I have seen
Somewhat, Kerazmin, more of Man than thou ;
And therefore authoriz'd to check the zeal
That glows in thee, methinks, with too much
fervour.

Hear, then, what mine Experience says of
Freedom :

It is, restraintless (such as thou admir'st)
The savage brute's sole privilege,—to roam
At large, and tear his fellow-brutes in pieces.
In peopled scenes, it were a libertine,
Sway'd by no principle,—no moral tie,—
Nor (sometimes) that of soft endearing kindred :
But, in the boundless range of its wild nature,
Spreading terrific evils,—its own fate
Bondage to Tyranny.

KERAZMIN.

Hold ! prithee, hold !
Lest I surmise that what, erewhile, was Sadi,
Has been transform'd to some old preaching
dervise.

SADI.

I had my sober admonitions clos'd,
 Save to aver, 'tis not my bosom's wish
 That Tyrants shou'd be crouch'd to. But, my
 friend,

No Tyrant reigns o'er *us*. *Our* Monarch—mild
 As he is just,—and wise as he is valiant,
 Exacts not from his Subjects *base* subjection,
 Degrading to the meanest of his people.
 'Tis true, his rule, extending far and wide,
 Is mark'd by strict precision ; and it ought ;
 Or such rebellion, as we have abetted,
 Wou'd plunge his realms in anarchy and ruin.

KERAZMIN.

Abetted! Sadi,—foster'd from its birth
 To full maturity, thou shou'dst have said :
 And, soon a giant huge, in all its strength,
 It will stalk forth, too mighty for our king,
 Dreamless of its approach, to overthrow.
 Encamp'd but with a portion of his army,
 Unconscious of the storm that hovers near,
 He is enjoying, just beyond the mountains
 Which hide the danger from him, games of
 pastime,

Thoughtless of coming-War. We loiter here,
 While our brave General, ready to attack,
 Should have our arms to aid him ;

SADI.

and our legs,
 To run away.—For, tell me not, Kerazmin !

That Cyrus, lull'd in safety, off his guard,
 And forming toys to please his baby-troops,
 As thou dost think, is unprepar'd for action.
 When was he ever found so? Wherefore *now*?
 And for what do we fight?—Possess'd of wealth,
 As thou most truly dost affirm we are,
 The battle will disperse *that*, like the leaves
 In Autumn; leaving us with empty stomachs,
 Only dry leaves to sleep on,—to awake
 Perhaps no more—Or if we wake, to know,—
 To *feel* in anguish, we have barter'd health,—
 (Thou say'st we have it) for what's worse than
 sickness—

Maim'd limbs,—dark dungeons,—or, may be—
 a gibbet.

I like not fighting, without fit occasion.
 Make *that* appear, and I will leave a banquet
 (Where many a spitted capon waits the eating)
 To spit a foe.—For *Independence*, fight we?
 Who is more independent than ourselves,
 And all the marchers *there*

[*pointing to the Soldiery, in the distance*]
 among the mountains?

We earn our bread and eat it. We acquire
 Possessions, and possess them.—'Round our cots,
 The Vine its branches spreads, with purple
 clusters,

To cheer us, after toil; and we are happy.
 Is *this* not *Independence*? none have more.

No one is dutyless in *any* station.
 The master needs the slave,—the slave the master:
That for his comforts.—*this* for his protection.
 As wisely may the head despise the feet,
 The feet the head, as social man rebel
 Against the sacred Order of Society.*
 Cyrus himself, despotic tho' he be,
 Is no more independent than ourselves.
 Yet, having leagued with thee and Azdriel,
 To face that dreaded king, I hence depart,
 And seek my station, as I am commanded.

KERAZMIN.

Thou hast a little cool'd my blood for fighting :
 And, what is more hast made me see the sin
 Of unrequir'd rebellion. What stern act,
 Oppressive to his realms, has Cyrus done,
 To call them up to mutiny ?—Yet now,
 Sadi ! it is too late for retrospect.
Onward they [pointing as before]
 yonder march ; and on must *we*.
 But Azdriel, in counsel soon will sit,
 And call on us, with other chieftains there,
 Fearless to speak our thoughts, ere on the camp
 Of Persia's King we pour the tide of battle.
 Accordant, ours may stem it.—This the way.

[*Exeunt.*]

* Alterum alterius auxilio eget.—Sallust.—See also St. Paul.

SCENE 2.—A wild forest,—

More wooded than the former ; yet, with similar Mountains
in the distance.

AHMED, (*solus*)

How awful is this Solitude ! where trace
Of man, to mar it, is not visible !
Its antler'd tenants fearlessly behold me ;
And, o'er my head, the sylvan choristers
Prolong their anthems with a varied sweetness,
As if the column'd, over-arching trees
Sustain'd a temple, whose cerulean roof
Were dedicated to resound with praise.
Flickering between the wildly-opening glades,
Noon's Sun-beams, vertical, devoid of cloud,
Play with the earth-cast shadows of the trees,—
Strewing the ground with emeralds. Around,
The graceful antelope,—the russet hare—
Timidity's known emblem—and the tribes
Of bolder animals, made wild and fierce
By persecuting Man,—here freely range,
Nor, 'frighted, shun me as an enemy,—
As one belonging to the lordly race
That wages cruel war against their species,—
Afflicting myriads of them with base wrongs
They are not heirs to.—Obdurate of heart,
Oh blush, ye tyrants of the woods and plains !
Who agonize, with needless pangs, the brute,—

And treat it, as if Nature had denied
 The creature feeling.—Analyse its frame,—
 Its nerves,—its veins, those channels of the heart,
 Where flows the life-blood,—colour of thine own ;
 And prove its sensibility of pain
 By torturing thyself.—Man has been call'd
 The Priest of Nature, as ordain'd to plead
 For those, who, speechless, cannot speak their
 wrongs,
 Save by pathetic wailings,—and as made
 To offer incense for the vast assemblage
 Of things that live, yet know not who sustains
 them.

Alas! alas ! how does this Sovereign-Pontiff
 Pervert his office ! immolating oft—
 Not for permitted food—the hapless brute
 He should protect and cherish !——

*[observing, suddenly, a hermitage in the
 rock, almost entirely concealed by
 trees]*

Yet here seems
 The dwelling-place or Sanctuary-nook,
 At least, of one true Guardian of the race
 That rove, and revel freely, this wild scene.
 ——— [*he calls*] Within, there ! who ?—I will
 not cross the threshold,
 Till bidden by the tenant of the cave,
 Be he my friend, or foe. Yet, foe to Ahmed,
 I trust dwells no where.—— [*calling louder*] Ho !
 I say within !—

No answer?—Well, this fragment of a tree,
The hermit's resting-place, shall now be mine,
While, on my tablet, some slight portraiture
I pencil of his rude romantic dwelling.

[*While sketching (seated on the trunk of a fallen tree) the Hermit unperceived by Ahmed, enters, from the opposite side, nearer to the Spectators.*

HERMIT.

What voice is that invades my solitude?
And who is he that calls, as if the forest
Own'd him its lord? A Soldier? What his
errand?

He is not here alone: for, ere he spake,
Far-diff'rent sounds, at intervals, I heard,
As of commingling whispers; which the breeze
Brought faintly to my ear, and then away
Wafted them into silence.—Vain for me
From him to hope concealment. Whether come,
With no set purpose, idly led by leisure,—
Or to whelm misery on my aged head,
I will accost him.

AHMED, (*still not seeing him, but looking at the Sketch*)

There!—'tis somewhat like.—
No longer must I loiter uselessly,
When busier scenes demand a Soldier's duties.

[*rising to depart, he sees the Hermit*]

HERMIT.

I greet thee, Stranger ! and my lowly door
Opens to speak thee welcome.

AHMED.

Good old man !

I thank thee ; and will cool my thirsty lip
With the pure lymph of that translucent spring,
Which gushes from the side-rock of thy dwelling.

[*The Hermit fetches, in a large Conch,
some water, and presents it. Having
drank, Ahmed says]*

Chaste element ! unpriz'd, because so common.
Thee mortals estimate, as they do Health :
That is, they do despise it. Yet, withheld
That blessing, which gives zest to ev'ry other,
Thro' oft-revolving days and nights of anguish,—
Then, then they know its value, and do thirst
Impatient for it, as, O blessed boon !
Wearied in mental thought, I did for thee.

[*returning the Conch*]

—Here,—take this pearly product of the ocean ;
And, with it, take my thanks.—May others' lips
Feel the soft beverage of thy crystal spring
Refreshing, Sir, as mine have !

HERMIT.

Simple fare,
For what thou art,—a soldier. Enter, pray,
My humble dwelling,—and a few plain cates,
With wild fruits of the desert, let me add

To sultry noon's repast. A poor man's welcome,—

And, may be, too, thy previous toils, will give
The relish, better viands might not find.

AHMED.

Anon, I will accept thy proffer'd kindness :
But, first, good father ! let me view these rocks,
Which, beetling, shade thy sylvan hermitage.
And tell me by what secret pleasing charni
Thou sway'st the natures of those dappled ran-
gers,

[*pointing off the stage, as if to some deer*]
For, all seem subject to thee.

[*As Ahmed and the Hermit retire towards
the upper end of the Stage, surveying
the scenery, three Banditti (Abdallah,
Mirza, and Hassan) appear from a
side-slip, near the bottom, unperceived
by Ahmed and the Hermit*]

First Bandit. (MIRZA)

Comrads ! lo !

We have more work than we had bargain'd for.
Instead of the old hermit, whose strong chest,
Hid in his rocky den, close-cramm'd with gold,
We must encounter, too, yon swaggering youth :
Some vile deserter from the camp of Cyrus,
Fonder of woods and hermits than of fighting ;
Or he wou'd not be idling in the desert,
Just on the eve of battle.—For, the stir,

And preparations in our chieftain's army,
 With orders strict, on penalty of death,
 For us, and every warrior to appear
 In the dark valley, ere the hour of eve,
 Tell me, that busy work will soon demand
 His aid, if he can lend it.—Pretty youth !

[spoken sarcastically and ironically]

Much better art thou suited to attune
 The dulcet lute, to some soft madrigal,
 And to philander with a lady's fan,
 Than to oppose War's rushing tide in battle.
 —Go home, unbearded boy! and rock the cradle
 Of thy still punier brothers.

Second Bandit. (ABDALLAH)

Mirza ! hush !

Thy vision, like the clown, who, thro' the tube,
 We name, a telescope, applied his eye
 To the wrong end, and Atlas call'd a mole hill,—
 Thy vision, or thy judgment, I do say,
 Is out of order : for the younger thing,
 That *there* is walking with the elder wight,
 Is like this oak, majestic in his stature ;
 And will not fall by bidding. Look again ;
 And if no dread of meeting *him*, be *thine*,
 Who lov'st a fray as I do love a feast,
 We will attack the hermit.

First Bandit. (MIRZA)

Comrads ! list !

The Sun now shines upon us : will it shine

On us to-morrow?—We have found a mine:
 Shall we be fearful to descend into it,
 Lest some uncourteous earth, or harder stone
 Shou'd tumble down, and intercept the treasure,
 By stopping up our breath-doors from all air,
 Or dashing out our brains?—Ye, both, know
 well,
 What time, disguis'd as poor and wand'ring
 minstrels,
 We found an entrance to the Hermit's den
 Thro' his fine ear, that drank in melody,
 As flow'rs imbibe the dew. Some chord we
 touch'd,
 By our uncertainly-directed skill,
 That melted him to tears.—He ask'd the lay
 Again, and then again, tho' it distress'd him:
 If 'tis indeed distress that always draws,
 From the heart's fountain—tears.—Whate'er it
 was,
 In air or words, that mov'd the old man's breast,
 It wrought a miracle: for, it unlock'd
 His iron-belted coffer, and thence drew
 A piece of gold—one that had slumber'd long
 Among a thousand.—O'er his shoulder, quick,
 I darted a keen glance, and there beheld
 What I have told you. Is the precious ore
 Worth digging for, at risk of some short peril?—
 An arrow's flight of time may give it us,
 Or so compose us, that we shall not want it.

—Another pressing reason—hear, my friends !
 Why the discover'd treasure now,—e'en *now*,
 Must be our own, or *never*. The stern fate
 Of battle may compel us to *forego*
 The shining booty, by unnumber'd chances.
 I, therefore, am for prompt experiment.
 If we succeed, the old owl's anxious cares,
 About his wealth, will cease. Our ownership
 Of *that*, will make us heirs too, of his mansion ;
 Where (having him sepulter'd with his champion)
 Close will we lie conceal'd, till far has pass'd
 The coming storm of conflict ; which our friends
 May brave and welcome,—sharing 'mong them-
 selves

Its wounds and deadly honours.—Nay, Sirs,
 more—

Possession of the rocky citadel,
 Where the old cockatrice has form'd his nest,
 Will ratify our undisputed right
 To borrow, as we need, from yonder herd
 A savoury banquet.—If possession fail,
 The failure may forestall the fate of battle :
 Which—if we enter it—may close our duties.—
 Ye have my meaning and shall have my aid,
 If ye determine boldly now to strike,
 Despatching double duty.

Second Bandit. (ABDALLAH)
 Now !

Third Bandit. (HASSAN)
 Now !

First Bandit. (MIRZA)

Well !

Hassan ! this bowstring round the grey cock's neck,

Will stop his crowing for the furious dog
That is a match for tiger or for pard.
Close following, thou, Abdallah ! and myself
Soon will compose the strippling.

Second and Third Bandits.

On ! then, on !

(*They rush, unperceivd upon Ahmed and the Hermit, while seated at their repast : when, while one of them is passing the bow-string round the Hermit's neck, he is, in an instant, struck down by Ahmed : who, having thus intimidated the other two, he, standing armed with the Sabre that had laid prostrate their companion, thus addresses them :)*)

AHMED.

Instant give me your weapons of offence,
Or mine is at your throats.

First Bandit.

Give them to thee ?

Aye, mine, I give thee thus, with all *my* heart,
To sheathe it in *thine* own.

[*soon thrown beside his prostrate companion, he exclaims*]

Hold ! hold ! I pray :
Here is my sword ;—my life is at thy mercy.

Second Bandit.

And so is mine : for thou art not a mortal ;
But some unearthly being, whose strong arm
'Tis folly to resist.

AHMED.

What was your purpose ?—If but one untruth
Find passage from your lips, 'twill be the last
Ye utter.—Promptly speak your purpose.

First Bandit.

Plunder,—

Of what we deem'd that world-forsaking man
Wou'd have no farther use for.

AHMED.

If your aim,

As was the wretch's, who there lies before you,
Be adverse to this holy Sage's life,
Or to my own,—instant shall both your heads
Leap from your shoulders, and, along the plain,
Roll to your dead associate. Nor deserves
Your *purpose* less,—your own avow'd intention
Of plundering me or this sequester'd man,
Whose solitude had claims on your forbearance,
But thirst of lawless gain (detested most
Of all the hateful brood of Avarice)
Seeking its own imagin'd Good in Ill,
Covets what proves its ruin. From the heart
It drives the angel Pity, that would save,

And, in her stead, fosters a cruel demon.
 O baneful thirst ! insatiate as the sands
 Of Araby, which, like an ingrate base,
 Drink the soft showers and dews of bounteous
 Heaven,
 All profitless,—unyielding meet return
 Of herbage fresh, or blushing odorous flowers !
 —That baneful thirst, misguided men ! is yours,
 Refusing to be satisfied with aught,
 In the vocation of accursed Crime,
 Till Robbery end in Murder ! Lust of wealth
 Genders the wish to perpetrate some wrong
 On social order :—and how deeply vile
 The mortal, limb'd with strength, unnerv'd by
 age,
 Who *chooses* such a vile detested calling,
 In preference to the honest tasks of toil,
 Which gladden while they profit ! Nay, rash men !
 He merits not the very air he breathes,—
 Much less the food he eats, for which another
 Wasted his sinewy strength.—Away ! take
 hence
 Your slain companion, whose untimely fate
 Was justly brought on his own guilty head,
 While in the base attempt to stifle life
 In this offenceless man, whose vital-glass
 Will fail full soon enough, to be no more
 Renew'd by time, without a Murderer's hand
 To shake it.—Tho' unsanguin'd lie that wretch,

His soul is deeply guilty. In *his* end
 Anticipate your *own*, if better deeds
 Mark not your future lives.—Begone ! and bear
 Your dead Monition with you.

First Bandit.

Noble Sir !

To such high sentiments of Truth and Honour,
 Thy Servants' ears, from guiding Reason's dawn,
 Have been estrang'd.—Rapine and lawless Might
 Alone our rules of conduct.—For myself,
 Contrite, I answer, that o'erwhelm'd with Shame,
 On acts atrocious, as they are unnumber'd,
 I look repentant.—For this trembling slave

[*pointing to Abdallah, his companion*]

I make no protestation. If devoid
 Of profit to *his* soul, have fal'n thy language,
 Dead is his nature, as that lifeless robber.
 —What I intreat is—let me, by thy counsel,—
 Thy presence, and example, daily grow
 Wiser and better. Let me, on thy footsteps
 Wait, as the shadow follows, in his course,
 Some Sovreign potent lord, whose high behests
 'Tis wisdom to obey.—

Second Bandit. (ABDALLAH)

Great Sir ! my chief

Hath so well cloth'd my wishes, in his words,
 That I implore, as humblest of thy vassals,
 Oh let me follow thee.

[*he also falling prostrate*]

AHMED.

Strangers ! attend :

Too young am I to fathom the deep mind
 Of practis'd Villainy and dark Deceit.
 I, therefore, to your suit, withhold my answer,
 Till this experienc'd, venerable man
 Utter his judgment. For, these desert wilds
 Have not, I ween, possess'd his lengthen'd being,
 From spring-tide days, to hoar autumnal age,
 Depriving the Societies of men
 Of virtues that might bless them.—Oft, 'tis said,—
 Full oft, those fly the world, who best wou'd
 grace it.

From what is all-*unworthy* of their virtues,
 They, stealing silently and unperceived,
 Away depart ; as, in the dead of night,
 Some little skiff glides, noiseless, thro' the waves
 With freightage light, and leaves no trace be-
 hind,

Bearing its owner to a distant land,
 Where higher views, and better traffickers
 Engross his care ;—so has my youth been told,
 The injur'd-Good abjure a treach'rous world,
 Renounce its friendships, and form other ties
 With unsophisticated simple Nature—

—Such, Strangers ! I imagine is the Sage,
 Who, awful with the majesty of years,
 Like these vast oaks which canopy his head,
 Graces this wilderness. Such is he deem'd

By me ; who, knowing of him nought of ill,
Am willing to invest his soul with Virtue :

HERMIT. (*apart*)

Oh cutting speech as from an Oracle !

AHMED. (*in continuance*)

For, like yourselves, at this eventful moment,
To me is he a stranger.—Anchorite !

Whom I have only seen to venerate ;
And, after interposing my young arm
To shield thy snowy locks from violence,
Am strongly prompted at thy sandal'd feet,
To lay my body down, in meet prostration—
Prithee ! do arbitrate between these men,
And him who asks thy counsel.

HERMIT.

I shou'd, Sir !

Fall prostrate, gratefully to kiss the foot
Of my unknown preserver,—sent by Heav'n,
Perhaps to save me from—[*apart troubled*]
deserv'd perdition !

As my poor counsel thou art pleas'd to ask,
Touching these two repentant men,—receive
them

To thy discreet and *cautious* Confidence ;
Tho' 'tis my judgment they will be found faithful.

AHMED.

Thanks, holy Father !—Friends (for henceforth,
such

I hold you)—his mild pardon first intreat :

And then,—if ye be gifted with such knowledge,
 Forgiveness supplicate from that dread Power,
 Who, tho' invisible to mortal sight,
 Assigns the Scourge to meditated crime,
 As if it were committed ; and rewards
 Each unfulfill'd intention of the Good
 With glorious approval.—'Twas your aim
 To stain your hands with Murder,—with the
 blood

Of that benignant saint, whose quiet conscience
 Is spotless as his beard.

HERMIT. (*apart*)

Oh wou'd it were !

First Bandit.

As proof, of our sincerity, dread Sir !
 Hear what may much concern thee :—Is thy lot
 Mingled with that of Cyrus ?

AHMED.

Why dost ask ?

First Bandit.

Because, if Cyrus know it not, he may,
 To his discomfiture, unless prepar'd,
 Before yon sun depart to other climes,
 Find, pouring down upon him like a torrent,
 Swell'd sudden and tremendous by a storm,—
 A treach'rous host. Conceal'd in the defiles
 Of yonder mountains, they conglomerate
 Up to this hour ; and soon will they descend,
 Num'rous as gossamer that idly play

In Summer's solar beam.—I blush, great Sir !
 To say, that, had not lust of this man's treasure
 Tempted us hither,—we, that treach'rous host
 Had join'd, for battle.—In our sinful project
 Thwarted by thee, of cutting short the thread
 That slenderly unites his life to earth,
 We are withheld from joining as commanded,
 The ranks of Azdriel. Nor, were we now free,
 Wou'd we degrade our swords in his rebellion.
 Reclaim'd by thy wise clemency and Worth,
 Henceforth, do we belong to thee and Cyrus.—
 More cou'd I say, yet, much as I do wish
 The light of thy bright eye to beam upon me,
 I do intreat thee, fly !—Lose not a moment !
 And to thy Sovreign's ear, in fewest words,
 Impart what I have told thee : and if, Sir,
 The *living* attestations of such slaves,
 As he and I, be needed to confirm
 The important truth—Oh let us, in thy footsteps,
 Instantly follow : and, if what I say
 Be false, the tongue that utters the base falsehood,
 Pluck from its root.—This venerable man
 Will properly dispose of the dead body
 Of my companion,—justly, by thy hand,
 Slain, in the act of crime,—of foulest crime,—
 Premeditated Murder !—On my head
 Which *plann'd* the guilty deed, shou'd fall like
 penalty :
 Yet am I spar'd !——[much moved]

But seemly penitence
 Must wait :—*Atonement* for the guilty deed
 Now claims my care.—[addressing the *Hermit*]
 Respected, holy man !

When thou dost lay him in some quiet grave,
 Wash, with a tear, the guilty stain away
 From this now feeble hand, that wou'd have slain
 thee.

[*Here—kneeling down, he seizes the right hand of his prostrate late accomplice, and, kissing it, sobbingly says, “ Farewell, poor Hassan ! ” then, much affected, he lays the hand gently down, and—rising,—addressing Ahmed, says]*

I must not command :—

But, with intreaties, as thou wert my brother,
 I do conjure thee, lead me on to Cyrus.

[*Exeunt, except the Hermit*]

HERMIT. (*who remaining near the body, says*)
 How marvellous this hour !—a little hour,
 That wou'd have been my last, but for this
 stranger !—

Surely a Providence, whose ruling Grace
 I merit not, him guided to my dwelling.—
 I merit not ? Nay, whose devouring wrath
 Justly, with burning vengeance might pursue
 My sinful steps.—**I AM A MURDERER !**
 And yet am sav'd from Murder !——Is this
 done,

That PUBLIC JUSTICE may be satisfied,
 By dooming me, in my dishonour'd age,
 To PUBLIC EXECUTION ?——Be it so,
 All-righteous Heav'n ! if my repentant tears
 Have not wash'd out, from Guilt's black damning
 page

My red transgression !—

[*a groan is heard—starting, he says*]

Whence that dismal sign
 Of Suff'ring,—as from some perturbed spirit ?
 Was it the utter'd cry of him I murder'd ?—
 Or did it burst, thou wretched man ! from thee,
 Who wou'dst have shed *my* blood ? from thee,
 whose soul,

Affrighted at the penalty it earn'd,
 Shrunk back from hell's dark horrors ?

[*another groan*] Hark ! again !

Oh ! worse than death such Solitude as this,
 To one whose conscience is his own tormentor !—
 —Pale, motionless companion of my misery !
 When I have dug thy grave, I'll dig my own ;
 And, and having laid thee down, will, close
 beside thee,

With this keen dagger, end my tortur'd being !
 —But—*shall* I end it, by that act ? or rather,
 Will not the hand, that rives my sinful heart,
 Open a passage for the deathless Soul
 To endless torments ?

[*a deeper groan—starting wildly, he exclaims*]

Come ! whate'er thou art,
 And blast me with thy vengeance !—I will say,
 Thou art a friendly minister, tho' cloth'd
 In flames tremendous !

[*another groan, still deeper,—when approaching the body, he says*]

Stretch'd, and stiffening corse !
 I wait not till my palsied hands might form
 A grave for thee and me :—I'll die beside thee,—
 Leaving that office for another stranger :
 Or some ferocious tenant of the forest
 May spare the labour by his greedy fangs,—
 Two, with blood-guiltiness upon their souls,
 Engulphing in a living sepulchre !——
 —Now brother in black crime ! my rushing spirit
 Hails thee !

[*preparing, with the drawn dagger, to fall beside him, another louder groan so alarms him, that the weapon falls from his hand : when he contemplates the body, and starts away, exclaiming*]

He lives !—his eyes do glare on me !

[*After a pause, seizing his hand, he continues, in transport*]

Tis warm ! the pulse beats ! and he shall recover !

[*Goes to the fountain, and brings water, which he administers, supporting him, and says*]

Oh, cou'd I raise thee up again to being,

I wou'd regard thee as a living token
 That I may be restor'd to spiritual life,
 And pardon'd of my crime!—I'll staunch thy
 wound,

And pour in balm to soothe it.—There! repose;
 Till I return with better comforts for thee.

[*He departs, soon returning with a pal-
 let and pillow ; when, having gently
 laid him down, he continues*]

Who is precluded from the exercise,—
 The god-like exercise of sweet compassion?—
 Tho' sever'd from the social haunts of men
 By mine own foul transgression, and here doom'd
 To weep in solitude,—the holy law
 Of Mercy have I yet the pleasing power
 Here to fulfil.—This erring fellow mortal,
 Who sought *my* life, shall, with my pardon, feel
 My tenderest care to save and soothe his own.—
 Who *shows* no mercy none deserves to *find* ;
 And none *will* find from Him, whom all offend.
 —O fairest Grace! design'd, by holiest powers,
 To be most seen on earth, as sweetest flowers
 Are there the most profusely seen to grow
 In Nature's Garden, on this globe below,—
 Say, who shall contrite Penitence despise,
 Or limit the forgiveness of the Skies?
 Obdurate Guilt alone, by righteous Heaven,
 Is left to live and perish unforgiven.

ACT 4.—SCENE I.

CYRUS,

(reclining on a *Sopha*, in a somewhat private apartment, is seen with a book in his hand ; when a servant of the palace enters ; and, falling on one knee, presents, from a golden salver, an inscribed card or paper. After looking at it, Cyrus says,) Direct the bearer hither. (the servant departs ; and Ahmed, saluting, enters : when the king rises and says)

Welcome, Ahmed.

The prompt obedience to our late requirement,
In bringing some brief annals of thyself
(So we presume) is pleasing, and the more
Creates desire to serve thee. For, young man !
There is a law in nature that constrains
All, save the wretch who lives but for himself,
To seek the good of others ; and that law
Is fraught with grace to him who honours it.
For, as the clouds return, in genial showers,
What had been drawn from Earth by solar heat—
So shou'd the high and affluent of mankind
Shed blessings, manifold, on all beneath them.
Beneath them ? Yes, as vallies lie beneath
Mountains enwombing wealth and cloth'd with
verdure ;

From whose steep sides gush fertilizing springs,
Which bid those vallies smile.—Ahmed! im-
part

What may concern thy weal for us to hear,
That appertains to thy dark history,—
Leisure and thou are now our wish'd companions.

AHMED.

My gracious king will please permit to sleep
All kind solicitude for one so humble,
And turn thy Royal Mind to loftier cares,
In which Thy Life,—and, what thou valuest
more,

The Safety of the State, are now involv'd.—
Private concerns shou'd yield to Public duties.

CYRUS.

What means my friend?—for, henceforth, such
is Ahmed.

Speak frankly, like thyself, to one who acts
Frankly to others,—hating all disguise.

AHMED.

My liege! I crave an instant gracious ear
For two rude stragglers from a rebel-camp;
Who state themselves, till dawn'd the present day,
To have abided in the rebel-army.
From their own lips, 'tis better the relation
Proceed, than mine: and, if those lips speak true,
Time presses the disclosure.—Just without,
They wait, O king! thy bidding.

CYRUS.

Bring them in.

[*Ahmed departs,—soon returning with the two men ; who, awed by the calm dignity of Cyrus, manifest apprehension : when the Monarch says,*]

Strangers ! approach : nay, tremble not : speak freely,

And fearlessly, if Truth direct your tongues ;
But shun all Falshood, as ye love your lives.

First Bandit.

Won by the conduct, most magnanimous,
Of this young Persian,—who our willing feet
Has guided to the footstool of his king,
We wou'd him serve and *thee*.—When sinks the
Sun

Now somewhat past his noon, behind those moun-
tains, [pointing to the distance]

And night begins to shroud the face of nature,
Your royal Camp, suspicionless of ill,
Will be attack'd by legions desperate,
And nought be heard thro'out the startled plain,
Save Havock's cries—for dire extermination.
These will forth issue from our recent masters,
If timely, not prevented.—Henceforth Thee,
Sov'reign august ! wou'd both thy vassals serve,—
Provided, in the ranks of this brave man,

[pointing to Ahmed]

Our lot be cast : for him, thro' thickest perils

Will we rush, fearless,—for *himself* fears none.
—But lose not, Sire, one moment: loss of *that*
May lose a Persian blessing,—losing thee.

CYRUS.

Whence comes the present apprehended peril?
And from what quarter of my own dominions?
For mine are all the vales and mountains round,
By right of Conquest or inheritance.

First Bandit.

The present peril comes, unless withstood,
As lightning sometimes comes, most unexpected,
While sleeps the shepherd in the sultry noon,
And blasts with death his charge.—Thine comes,
O King!

From the defiles, between the lofty rocks
Which bound yon sever'd hill, whose rugged top,
Steril of herbage, ne'er was press'd by fleece
Of bleating ranger.—First, I wou'd advise
That pass secur'd by none but men of valour:
For those *are* such, whom they will there en-
counter,

Scorning to yield an inch till over-master'd.—
Select, then, men of tough unshrinking texture,
Enur'd to conquer, but unus'd to yield:—
And where, in all your Majesty's bold warriors,
Is *his* [pointing to Ahmed] superior to lead the
way?

—Hold us in pledge,—if doubt of our assertion
Still rest, a moment, in the royal mind.—

But moments form the present wasting day :
And it may close on thee, to dawn no more.

CYRUS.

Ahmed ! thy judgment ?—speedy ! what dost think
Of this man's prompted measures ?

AHMED.

Sire ! I think
They merit our regard,—with this exception—
An abler Leader, to the threaten'd pass,
My King may find, than I ; and let my arm
Assist him. By the guidance of these men,
The quarry we shall light on, ere its plans,
For spoil and plunder, be quite perfected.

CYRUS, (*to Ahmed privately*)

Dost think the substance of their strange relation
So founded in reality and reason,
As to call forth our best arrang'd resistance ?

AHMED.

I do, my liege ! from what, before, they told me,—
(The time not serving now to utter it)
And from their candour in your Highness' pre-
sence.

I therefore think them trusty. Shou'd they prove,
As are too many, false,—they will not live
To *profit* by their falsehood.

CYRUS.

Go, young man !
Whose prudence wins our favour,—go, and bear
This Token to Barozzar.

[*delivering a sealed billet*]

Him 'twill tell,
 Within the secret chamber, to convene
 The Senate, ere the waning hour expire :
 And *this*, young man ! exhibit to the view
 Of Allah, on the finger where I place it,—

[*putting a ring on one of Ahmed's fingers*]

Him telling to attend there, with the Chiefs
 Who head our armies. Thou who *bear'st* the
 pledge

Wear it till 'tis reclaim'd.

[*Ahmed bows and departs*]

I, too, depart

To meet whom I assemble. At *his* post
 Shou'd be the *Monarch-Sentinel*, when he
 Summons his subject-Officers to aid him.
 The post of Duty is the post of Honour.—

[*The Guards, with the two Banditti
 (who had retired to the back-ground)
 follow Cyrus*]

SCENE 2.—A private Apartment.

Hinda and Mandane.

MANDANE.

My ordeal o'er, I am delighted, Mother !
 Thee to embrace in privateness and peace ;—
 Delighted more, to see thee so restor'd

To health and sweet composure : for, I heard,
 O'ercome by kind Solicitude, the Scene
 Of my distinction thou wert forc'd to leave,
 Ere clos'd my trial. *How 'twas clos'd I know
 not,—*

Or well or ill ; or whether, with thine own,
 Thy daughter's feelings were in unison.
 From agitated fears that I might err—
 I know not whether error were not mine,—
 So wishing to avoid it.—What has heard
 My gentle Mother ?

HINDA.

Mother's lips will tell
 Their children truths, which a dissembling world
 Will qualify with specious flatteries,
 To *please* a guileless heart,—perhaps *corrupt* it,
That world may deem itself a charter'd talker,
 To speak unfetter'd by the sacred law
 Which binds a parent to integrity,—
 To speak what only best a daughter's mind
 May sway to virtue.

MANDANE.

Say, what means my Mother ?

HINDA.

I have been told, Mandane ! my lov'd Child !
 That, at the final closing of the scene,
 While Ahmed was on bended knee, before thee,—
 When on his Victor-brow, all that thy hand
 Had to perform, was to repose the laurel—

That thou didst seem as if thy fluttering heart
 Were in the chaplet ; and that, save the youth
 Who bow'd before thee,—in thy estimation
 All else the world contains were valueless :
 I too, am told that, when he rose, Mandane !
 His eye met thine, and kindled in thy cheek
 Just such a blush, as the bright Orient gives
 To a white fleecy cloud.—That thy soft hand
 Shou'd tremble at the office, when the eyes,—
 The myriad-eyes of Persia's Sons and Daughters
 Were fix'd on thee—I do not marvel much.
 For well I know that, at the trying moment,
 Which thousands wou'd have coveted around thee,
 Thou rather wou'dst have all thy charms conceal'd
 In close retirement.—*That*, perchance, my child !
 Was the quick spring that touch'd thy maiden-soul,
 And bade it vibrate with such new emotions.

MANDANE.

Oh my lov'd Mother ! spare me.—That the scene,
 If not the actors in it—chiefly he,
 Whose merits claim'd my service, strangely
 mov'd me,
 I do confess. Surprize too, did I feel,
 That such a triumph was ordain'd for one
 So unexpected to accomplish it,—
 By one so humble, and so ill-attir'd
 In what pertains to lordly chivalry.
 Yet, lowly tho' he seem'd, and last of all

In going to the start—he let pass on
 His richly-plum'd competitors awhile,
 As Eölus lets loose his vassal-winds—
 The lesser breezes, just to woo a flower,—
 And, when he wills, the mighty Tempest-mover
 Sweeps o'er the plain, uprooting, as he flies,
 Whate'er opposes his resistless course.

So, Mother ! did the young victorious Soldier :
 And who cou'd *see* the deed and not *applaud* it ?
 This did thy daughter: this th' assembled crowd,
 By acclamations, which shook all the plain :
 And, doing thus, if in my simple bearing,
 There was of error aught,—for the offence
 Let my confessing it exculpate me.

HINDA.

My Child ! I do forgive thee : but remember,
 Thou art betroth'd. Inviolate and pure
 Thy plighted promise be, as made to Heaven ;
 And Heaven will bless thee. Spotless, too, thy
 faith,

As is the bosom-casket that retains it,
 Be to the ingenuous prince who doats upon thee !
His heart (and one more noble never throb'd
 With love's soft passion) is in thy sole keeping.
 —Beware then, Sweet ! and raise no anguish'd
 doubt

Of thy fidelity, in good Artaxes.

MANDANE.

The love I bear Artaxes, gentle Mother !

And whatsoever the feeling be I have
 Tow'rds this young Stranger, clash not in my
 bosom.

I wist not what it is I feel or fear
 In this new passion,—passion, yet it is not :
 Nor know I what it is : and yet, methinks,
 I wou'd, to save his life, were *that* in danger,
 Lay down my own in forfeit.—Wou'd I ne'er
 Had seen him ! or thus having seen his form,
 That I might see it always !—always live,
 Where summer's brightest day wou'd brighter
 seem,
 Enliven'd by his presence.

HINDA, (*apart—greatly moved*)

Wondrous power !

Inscrutable, O Nature ! are thy workings.—

MANDANE.

What said my gentle Mother ? Have I griev'd
 The breast that nurtur'd me ?—Indeed ! indeed !
 I wou'd not *that* : but rather let my own,
 Corroded by unhappiness, become
 The home of sickness, and invite stern death
 To lay me on his couch of mouldering earth,
 Than give one pang to *her* who gave *me* being !

[*Hinda weeps*]

Weep not, my Mother. If it be thy will,
 No more I'll see the stranger. For, the child
 That will not, for a Parent's sake forego
 A fancied pleasure ; but proceeds in wrong,

Till wretchedness afflict that Parent's heart,
 Perhaps to breaking—is a Parricide !
 Avenging Heav'n hurls down its deadliest curse
 On guilt so foul and so unnatural !—
 By act of disobedience to thy wish,
 Thy daughter will not bring upon thy head
 One snow-white hair, sooner than time would
 plant it.

Then, henceforth, best of parents ! speak no more
 Of him thou dreadest : for, no more shall he
 Alarm thee : yet from my warm orisons,
 I cannot,—will not shut him.

HINDA, (*falling on her daughter's neck*)

O Mandane !

Thou wilt, before my own appointed time,
 Wring a deep secret from me.—

[Weeps and pauses.—Mandane, leading
her to a sopha, seats herself beside her,
in an endearing manner]

MANDANE.

Here repose :

And let no word find utterance of thy tongue
 That is not prompted by thy ready Will.
 —“ A secret ?” and “ a deep one,” said my Mo-
 ther ?

Then let it, 'bide in its own sanctuary,
 Till meet discretion school thy Child to share it.

HINDA.

Discreet and good thou art : and I *will* trust
 thee—

THE SOLDIER IS THY BROTHER !

[*overcome, she conceals her face with a handkerchief—*]

MANDANE, (rising up in wonder and ecstacy)

Gracious Heaven !

Mysterious in thy doings,—then have I
One blessing more, from thy Munificence,
Than I have prais'd thee for.—Ahmed my bro-
ther ?

Oh what a Jewel, hitherto conceal'd
In the base world's dark mine from my fond gaze,
Now flings its splendors on me !—But where is
he ?

He by applauding multitudes admir'd,
Whom I may talk of now, and look on too,
Nay, e'en caress, and by him be caress'd,
Without a crime.—What hidden power within
me,

Whisper'd him precious to my conscious heart,
That wou'd have leapt from its confining bounds,
To beat with his, in rapture, when I saw him ?
Now let the flutterer find its Counterpart,
To be transported with his warm affection.
It will, I know, yearn on me from his bosom,
As is belov'd its owner by Mandane.

HINDA.

Warm-hearted girl ! restrain thy new-born joy,
Till fitting time for Ahmed and ourselves
To meet the revelation—My lov'd child !

That time is not the present. Other cares,
 Now pressing on our Monarch, and on Ahmed,
 Involve *him* suddenly in their importance,
 Precluding e'en the knowledge of myself
 From his ingenuous mind, that I am she
 Who gave him being. Abbas, holy man !
 Will, by his wisdom, best prepare that mind
 For a disclosure that might else o'erwhelm it.
 I, with that friend of Ahmed and of thee,—
 (Whom ye both reverence as a Friend and Father)
 Will straight confer ; and thou, my gentle
 daughter !

Seek good Zuleika; who, of thy strange fortunes,
 Knows what may well-nigh spare my tongue the
 task,—

The painful task, of thy requir'd relation.
 Tell *her* what *thee* I've told,—imparting too
 A knowledge of the Cause why, yet, from Ahmed
 Our prudence must withhold his history.
 Go, my lov'd child ; and bear my blessing with
 thee !

[*Mandane, saluting her Mother, departs,
 with artless vivacity : Hinda, remaining alone, after surveying her
 retiring Daughter with affectionate
 tenderness, exclaims*]

Oh ! in that Form so lovely, what a Soul
 Doth harbour ! as the spirits of the blest
 Are said to 'bide in shrines of rarest beauty.—

Since the maternal, now forgotten pang
That brought her to the world,—not one, from
Her,
By breach of Duty, has my bosom felt ;
But pleasures—what a store ! In converse sweet,
With her, the soother of each bitter care,
Oft have I fancied the revolving hours
(If such mean measurements we may apply
To things eternal) oft imagin'd them
Portions of perfect bliss. Nay, oft-times thought,
When pacing side by side,—arm link'd in arm,
That Heaven in Her, an angel ministrant,
Had, gracious, sent, my spirit to prepare
For its high glories.—Hark !

[*a gong sounds near the palace*] the signal-call

For council of vast import (so I hear)
Which may avert destruction from my country.
At such a crisis,—awful with alarm,
Woman's true post is privacy and prayer :—
These now be mine and my belov'd Mandane's!

[She departs suddenly, on hearing a flourish of trumpets, at some distance. They cease: and the Scene changes to a State-Chamber, discovering Cyrus, on his throne, attended by Senators and Generals.]

SCENE 3.—A State Council.

CYRUS.

We have conven'd this Council, noble peers !
 And ye brave Leaders of my valiant army !
 On matter of high moment : so, at least,
 We deem the showing ; which, tho' somewhat
 strange,

Has met our knowledge. *That*, in brief, is thus :
 Two men, by Ahmed found, intent on plunder,
 Within the neighbouring forest, have confess'd
 That Azdriel, follow'd by unnumber'd legions,
 Is, at this moment, ready to rush down
 Like a swol'n mountain-torrent from the heights
 Which bound our camp, “ suspicionless,” to
 storm it.

—I quote their term, that ye may feel its mean-
 ing.—

That Time (to all a treasure)—might to us
 Not lose its value,—promptly we dispatch'd
 The men with Ahmed, and a chosen band,
 To find the truth or falsehood of their tale ;
 Meanwhile convoking you, my sage advisers !
 To aid me with the dictates of your wisdom.—
 Speak freely, then ; as Freedom prompts the
 Good,

When all they prize and honour is in danger..

ALLAH, (*a veteran martial Chief, after a short pause, during which the members of the Council look intently on him, says*)

Great Prince ! my brave associates, and these peers,

Well-vers'd in duties of the State and Field,
 Consentient look to me, for my opinion,—
 Never withheld, when Public Good demands it,
 Whether it suit or not the public palate,
 Capricious oft, and versatile as is
 The shifting wind. An honest man points
 straight,

Like the unvarying magnet, to his object,
 Unhinder'd by opposing waves of faction.—
 Thus, then, obedient to the king's behest,
 Who values one who counsels him aright,
 Far more than those who, e'en with praise deserv'd,
 Extol his deeds—thus, by a patriot-tongue,
 Are utter'd Truth's dictations : Promptly act,
 When Danger threatens, and forestal the foe
 In his concerted purpose ; yet, well weigh
 The *means* for action : lest inadequate,
 Or not in unison with Time and Place,
 They leave the Bravest, like a toiled lion,
 Shorn of his power, and at a dastard's mercy.
 In warfare, oft must Mind's unfilmied eyes
 Pierce things impervious to the visual sense,
 Lest Passion urging, where clear Thought wou'd
 stay,

Precipitancy prove the headlong rock
 To 'scapeless Ruin. Nor, tho' all seem safe,
 By reason of deceptive Quietness,
 Must we presume no lurking peril near.
 Howe'er entrench'd or castled, let Mistrust
 And wakeful Vigilance prevent Surprisal.
 If come the foe, cool, timely Preparation
 Will prove the best ally, to keep secure
 What a supine or unwise Confidence
 Might irretrievably but wreck to pieces.
 Mine arm, O king! has fought thy battles,—now
 'Reft of its wonted vigour; while my head,
 Tho' snow'd by Time, retains its energies
 Unfrozen yet by Age,—and will, till Death
 Shall pillow it within a soldier's grave,
 Be at my Country's service. Pithier arms
 Will, from the tree of Merit, sprout and shoot,
 To screen from jeopardy the land they love:
 But, for warm wishes, in my Sovereign's Cause,
 There runs not sap, in any war-worn trunk,
 More genial than in mine.—Most wisely, Sire!
 Hast thou, on this important State occasion,
 Acted, to bless thy people,—as, anon,
 The State will know, by means of faithful Ahmed:
 Who, tho' but green in years, by Wisdom train'd,
 Blossoms, unless I err in augury,
 Another Hope of Persia.—Such defenders
 (As veterans, like myself are on the wane)
 Shoot up, beneath the favouring smile of Heaven,

To bless the soil that rears them. Train'd aright,
 In early Youth,—firm Manhood sees them grow
 Inflexible as is the forest cedar
 That rocks the eagle's eyrie in its arms.
 Thence, to the younger branches of their tribe,
 Descends, what *them* will emulate to be,
 Like their ancestral names'-men, and exemplars,
 The State's firm pillars, and a free land's pride.
 For, States are but as larger families ;
 And kings but crowned fathers of their subjects,
 Heaven-destin'd for their good ; as, Sire ! art
 Thou :
 While they, protected by the throne they streng-
 then,
 Rejoice beneath its god-like clemency.

As loves a child, too, those who gave him being,
 And, *them* to save wou'd breathe away his life
 In torture on the rack,—so, gracious Prince !
 Wou'd all who know thy virtues die for Thee.

CYRUS.

He who ne'er witness'd what a generous people
 Will do and suffer for the king they love,
 Might hear, incredulous, such warm professions :
 But I, who oft have seen whole squadrons rush
 On death, to save me, know thy words are true,
 Proclaim'd as by an oracle.—Brave Man !
 Whose very Name, on many an eve of battle,
 Has heralded discomfit to thy foes,—

As then we lauded thee, we thank thee now,
 For thine instructive lecture.—Like thyself,
 Frank, honest, and sincere,—as all advice,
 Address'd to ear of Royalty shou'd be,
 It meets, as well it merits, our regard.—
 For, well hast thou defin'd a Sovereign's province,
 By leading our perceptions, whither turn
 Our fondest thoughts—to dear domestic scenes ;
 Assimilating kings' and subjects' duties
 To those of parents and their treasur'd children.
 Performing as I have, and will—(while flow
 Life's purple currents thro' my healthy frame)
 All in my power to make my people happy,
 No debt they owe ; because such deeds HE claims.
 The King of kings, who placed me on the throne,
 Not there to reign an isolated being,
 Sole, independent, unaccountable ;
 But, in His fear, and hoping His approval,—
 Seeking my people's Good.—More on this theme
 My heart cou'd speak, wou'd pressing Time
 allow.—

Your sentiments, unfetter'd, gallant friends !
 As those of Allah, your distinguish'd chief,
 Will, in my bosom, find a like reception.

Second General.

Our Chief has prov'd that he can grace the Senate,
 As well as gather laurels in the field.
 We shall be honour'd if what now *his* lips

Have utter'd, be permitted to express
The dictates, gracious Sovereign ! of our hearts.

CYRUS.

Tho' it is more *your* province, noble peers !
To speak, than those brave men,—I wish'd their
thoughts

Before I sought for yours, on this occasion ;

Its aspect being of a martial order.—

With speech unfetter'd, now oblige your king.

Chief Senator,

My compeers bid me join their commendations
With mine, of what the gallant Chief has spoken.
Let words be few, when Danger looks for deeds.
—The Sentiments of our paternal Prince
Will, in the matter, gratify his Council.

CYRUS.

Then, Senators and Generals ! they are these :
It is my judgment that what forms the terrors,—
The numerous bands, of which this brace of Slaves
Report so largely, and in such dread terms,
Are but the wreck and refuse of the host
Whom we dispers'd or slew at Babylon ;
That City, belted with strong walls and bulwarks,
Which wondering mortals deem'd (in its own
phrase)

Impregnable—Impregnable to whom ?
To those who crouch at shadowy forms of danger :
Not to the troops who, scorning such munitions,
Will scale the rocks of Ocean to dislodge

The foe that threatens them. This scatter'd wreck
 Is either part of those who mock'd high Heav'n,
 With base Belshazzar, on his impious throne ;
 Or else a portion of the routed force
 Which 'scap'd our vengeance on the plains of
 Sardis,

When Crœsus, flush'd—as many a foolish man
 Is, by abundant wealth, rush'd on to ruin.—
 If the redoubted leader of these bands
 Be emulous to rival Crœsus' name,
 In Crœsus' fate—why be it so.—Sage peers !
 And ye brave Generals of my well-train'd army !
 Hear my resolve ; and meditate the means
 To execute my purpose.—'Twas my hope
 (As late express'd by me in festal hour)
 That henceforth, while the Sovereign King of
 Kings

Deign to let rest on my unworthy brow
 The Persian Crown, my wide-extended realms,
 In peace and joy, might peaceful arts pursue.
 Yet, as this leader of misguided men
 Solicits chastisement, to teach him prudence,—
 Advance to give it ! In the foremost ranks
 Soon will be seen your king, to witness deeds
 Of prowess in his soldiers, which Reward
 Shall promptly honour—Forward ! my brave
 friends !

On ! stay not, for, while we are lingering here,
 Our foes, alert, are meditating mischief.

[Cyrus rises from the throne ; and, just as the Council is dissolving, Ahmed re-enters, introducing a Messenger from Azdriel, bearing an Ensign of safe passage, and some commission, which he takes from his bosom.]

AHMED.

Sire ! on our way to the directed Pass,
We met this messenger ; who, from his Chief,
Bears (so he doth aver) a written trust,
To be delivered by his hand to thee.

[The Messenger having respectfully delivered his sealed Communication, is ordered by Cyrus (properly attended) to retire : when the King, having given the Roll to an attendant Officer, commands him to read it aloud]

“ TO CYRUS,—THE HIGH AND MIGHTY KING
OF PERSIA :

“ SIRE,

“ Why, at the head of a powerful army,
“ I am now approaching your Camp, it is needless
“ for me to say. Your Highness professes to be a
“ Patron of Right, and a Friend of Humanity.—
“ Myself and those who unite their fortunes with
“ me, demand the former : which, if not conceded
“ to us, we are determined to obtain, or perish :
“ But, feeling ourselves no less friendly” to the

" cause of Humanity than the Monarch whom we
 " address, the following proposal is made, to spare
 " that effusion of human blood, which must un-
 " avoidably attend the conflict of armies. Give us
 " the Independency we claim; or, either by yourself,
 " or one of your Generals, let me be met in single
 " combat,—the level plain, near your own Camp,
 " being the arena for Contest;—and spears, on
 " chargers, being the weapons, till one of the
 " combatants shall be dismounted; and then with
 " swords to end the battle.—Should I prove vic-
 " torious, the Independency I claim shall be the
 " meed of victory. If I fall, the army, at whose
 " head, and with whose concurrence this is written,
 " pledge themselves forthwith to blend their weal,
 " in quiet submission, with the Soldiers of Cyrus.

" AZDRIEL."

CYRUS.

By Heavens! 'tis bravely spoken, and makes
 whiter
 The crime of his rebellion: for I love
 True valour, even in an enemy,—
 Especially, when its ferocious features
 Are smooth'd and temper'd by the holy touch
 Of soft Humanity. The *truly* brave
 Are always such; fierce lions in the battle,—
 Lambs, when the conflict ceases. None but
 cowards
 Are ever cruel.—Generals! to our tent,

That bears our waving ensign on the plain,
 Instant we go ; and, ere the present Sun
 Sink two degrees in his diurnal course,
 Ourself will meet this challenger. Prepare
 The goodly steed, on which I cross'd Euphrates ;
 And whose hard hoofs, the moment that they
 press'd

The golden strand,—all-eager in pursuit
 Of the fast-flying foe, from every flint
 Struck fire. I like his mettle and his temper,-
 Well-suited, on to bear me to this rival,
 Who seems both bold and gentle.—Peers ! recall
 The Messenger ; and let him carry back
 This our reply : *His challenge is accepted :*
And (distance not forbidding) on the plain
He specifies, soon as 'tis known he's there,
A lance-man will await him.—Who that be,
 It matters not his knowing. I AM HE.

ARTAXES.

My Sovereign ! deign to grant me this one boon.
 Altho' the rebel-chief, before thine arm,
 Were but as is a feather in the tempest,
 Yet, add not to the pride of his last hour
 By consciousness of combating with thee.
 For, just as fruitless were it for the Sun
 That glads creation, to conceal his beams
 At this eventful moment, as for thee
 To 'scape his cognizance—Let me go forth
 To meet the rebel-chief : and, arm'd in right,

Defended by high Heaven, will I chastise
His proud presumption—

CYRUS.

Cousin ! I admire
Thy ready zeal ; and doubt not of thy prowess.
But I have reasons which concern another,
That bar thy spear and thee from this encounter.

AHMED.

My liege ! thy royal reason is mine own,
For interposing my unworthy self
Between Artaxes and this unknown chief.
I read him valiant, from his written Message ;
And thence, more emulous am I to break
A lance with him.—On me,—on me, my king !
Fall the proud privilege to bring his thousands
To thy paternal sway. To vanquish him,
Or be myself o'ercome, I am prepar'd ;
Tho' from the last contingency of battle
(Such is my confidence and holy trust)
HE whom I fear, and fear *alone*, will guard me.
As for *Thyselv*, descending from thy throne,
To teach a rebel *duty*—mighty Prince !
These peers and generals in behalf of Persia,
Forbid the risking of that precious life,
In which thy subjects live ; and, gracious Sir !
A like, tho' not so high and great a reason
Moves me to supersede the valiant arm
Of good Artaxes. Shou'd he by this Chief
Be slain,—another's fate,—another's life,

Wou'd be involv'd in his. Mine; therefore, Sire !
 Be this great quarrel. In it, if I fall,
 I fall, as does some solitary tree,
 Uprooted by a tempest in the desert,—
 Unmiss'd, and unregretted.—

[Cyrus smiles, having wiped away a tear]
 That kind look

Tells me my suit is granted. Gracious Prince !
 Oh quench not, with refusal, my bright hope
 Of rendering the Combat's coming hour
 The brightest of my days.

CYRUS.

Speak, sapient friends !

Your judgment fearlessly : for your opinion
 Shall clothe in armour, instantly, for battle,
 My Champion or myself. Determine promptly.

First Peer.

O Eye and Light of Persia ! live for ever !
 And from thy head be kept the shade of danger !
 As we wou'd wish the tranquil smile of Peace
 To bless our clime,—our homes to be secure
 From lawless violence and dread invasion,—
 Our Altars unpolluted, and our vows
 To rise unfetter'd from our holy shrines,—
 Nay, as we wish the full, unfailing tide
 Of prosp'rous Commerce to pervade our land—
 This is our pray'r : May He, whom now we hail
 The Monarch of our Hearts—in Health and
 Peace,

E'en to the latest term of mortal age,
 Still grace the throne of Persia!—Peril, then,
 And such a Monarch (in whose Life the lives
 Of millions are involv'd) be wide apart,
 As is the couch the glorious Sun doth quit,
 To its pavilion in the gorgeous west!
 And, while *from* peril Persia's sons can shield
 him,
 They *will*, or nobly die.—Wherefore, great Sir!
 Thy CHAMPION,—the young Champion of our
 choice,
 And not Thyself, must meet this Challenger.

Second Peer.

That is my judgment,—that my fervent prayer.
All. We in that judgment, in that prayer accord.

CYRUS.

Who, then, in your deliberate estimation,
Is the selected Champion?

All. Ahmed ! Ahmed !

[*Crossing his hands over his breast,*
Ahmed bows in silence, with smothered emotion]

CYRUS.

Again, brave Allah ! thy *distinctive* judgment,
 (Due from thy greater age and war-experience)
 Will gratify the council. Speak it freely.

ALLAH.

Then, Sire ! as touching the ingenuous Youth,
 Whom now the gen'ral voice proclaims thy
 Champion,

My judgment, coolly-form'd, unwarped, is this :
The spear and sword of Cyrus, or of Right,
Cannot to braver and more skilful hands,
Be trusted. Conscious Proof thus bids me speak.
In the great conflict with thy recent foe,
When numbers multitudinous and daring,
Encompass'd whom we here rejoicing see,—
Our Patriot King, uninjur'd—Ahmed *then*
Stood a tremendous prodigy. Mine eye
Beheld him,—by a band of Lydians,
Singly assail'd. On them, his fiery steed
He urg'd : when, as before the whirlwind's force,
Frail reeds fall prostrate, near some river's brink,
So fell, beneath his flaming scimitar,
The fierce assailants,—fell, to rise no more !
Amid the wondering host, he seem'd a god,
Invincible ; and Azdriel, as *they*,
Shall quail before him.

AHMED

O my honour'd Chief !
Praise such as thine (engendering *here* no pride)
Impels to future glory. Thee I thank ;
And you who grace this Council, for your favour :
But most its grateful tribute wou'd my soul
Pour at His feet, in whose approving smile——

CYRUS.

I interrupt thy generous ecstasy,
Ahmed ! to say, thou art disqualified.—
Look at the challenge : *there* wilt thou behold

This stipulation——“ *Let me, by yourself,
Or, by one of your GENERALS, be met
In single Combat.*”—But, young man, approach.

[*Ahmed modestly approaches, and sinks
on one knee : when Cyrus touches his
head with a Sceptre and says*]

Go forth a General ! and return a Conqueror !

AHMED, (*still kneeling, says*)

More gratitude glows here, than I can utter.

[*Then springing on his feet, he emphati-
cally says*]

Let me now leave this presence ; and, as wills
My Sovereign-Lord, “ go forth.” Cheerful, I go,
To die or conquer. Yet, if this young heart
Presage not wrongly, soon will it be mine—
Not in my own, but in a Mightier’s strength,
Triumphant to return.

[*looking both to the court and audience,
he says*]

Your wishes kind

I bear with me, and leave all fear behind.
Who combats for his Country and his King,
A laurel-chaplet home with him will bring ;
Or shou’d he fall, that laurel o’er his tomb,
Water’d by Beauty’s tears, shall fadeless bloom,

END OF ACT THE FOURTH.

ACT 5.**SCENE 1.—A family Apartment.**

Abbas and Hindā.

ABBAS.

"Tis as thou say'st ; a challenge *has* been sent
By some rebellious leader in the mountains ;
And Ahmed, as the Champion of the king,
Is chosen, by the Senate to accept it,—
The king conceding his declar'd resolve
To combat with the chief, lest Persia's weal
Might, by the *risk* of combat, be endanger'd.

HINDA.

Oh, then the Senate, in their wise selection,
Deem Ahmed's orphan-life a thing of nought,—
To others valueless, as is the hart
That roams the forest,—none regarding it,—
A mark for any archer ! If he fall,
No parent's eye, they think, will shed a tear,—
No friend lament him !

ABBAS.

Pray be comforted !
I am inform'd,—and that too by a peer,
Whose presence at the council was important,
That Ahmed, in a way that mov'd the Senate,

And Cyrus, e'en to tears.—did *urge* his wish
 To meet the challenger : and when the voice,
 Accordant, of the king and whole assembly,
 Complied,—the rapture of thy valiant Son
 Was equal'd only by his piety,—
 Declaring he went forth with other strength
 Than human,—trusting to return victorious.
 I therefore fear not for him. His strong arm
 Will do its duty ; and his pious trust
 Will crown the act with most sublime emotion.
 —I told thee not—what is indeed a trifle,
 To a great soul, like his,—that, ere he left
 The Council, to accoutre for the Combat,
 His Sov'reign did with sceptred dignity,
 Pronounce him General : thus bestowing rank
 Unprecedented on so young a Soldier.

HINDA.

Ah ! what is rank, and what is state-distinction,
 That may expire the day they were created !
 The honour thus conferr'd upon my Ahmed,
 At this dread crisis, aptly may accord
 With Persia's custom, that adorns with flow'rs
 The sacrificial victim. O'er my Son
 'Twill not extend a war-proof Shield to save him.

ABBAS.

No : his own arm, and cool determin'd courage
 Will that accomplish, in the holy cause
 Which is a panoply to spear impervious.—
 Is the young hero's mighty martial heart

As much a stranger to the kindred ties
 Of Son and Brother, as it is to Fear ?
 The *knowledge* of those ties, at such a crisis,
 I, Madam, deprecate ; because that heart
 Is tender as 'tis brave ; and love of life
 For thee and for Mandane, might inspire
 A wish that now he knows not. Such a wish,
 New-rais'd within him,—as the solar ray,
 At vernal tide, will melt congealed waters,
 Might loosen and unnerve his sinewy arm,
 When, terribly, it should be lifted up
 Against his fierce opponent.

HINDA.

Should he fall,
 He will not *feel* the pain of *giving* pain
 To those who love him. For, excepting thee,
 Whose gen'rous kindness, with *his* growth has
 grown,

He deems himself an isolated thing ;
 Which, being cancel'd from creation's works,
 None will e'er miss or care for. Mine 'twill be,
 And poor Mandane's, to sustain the pang
 Of that emotion for ourselves and him.

ABBAS.

What ! does *Mandane* know he is her Brother?

HINDA.

She does : for I did fear me that her heart,
 Which is betroth'd,—as thou know'st, to Artaxes,
 Was strangely smitten by some sudden passion,

That might, if left to work, produce some wrong
 To him ; and to herself more deadly ill.
 I therefore was impell'd, before the time
 We otherwise had purpos'd, to reveal
 The deep and solemn secret,—still withholding
 What else relates to our sad history.
 The case demanded it : for, to my view,
 And to her bosom-friend, Zuleika's also,
 She was enamour'd of the youthful victor,
 Whose brow her hand had crown'd.—Guess my
 delight,

To see her fine frank nature burst with joy,
 On hearing what I told her.—Thanking Heav'n,
 “ That had in its rich stores, munificent,
 “ Reserv'd one Being more to make her bless'd,
 “ Than she had prais'd it for.”—Awhile her breast
 Heav'd with emotions of its new-felt love,—
 Silence, her tongue enchanting : when, at last,
 She said, while smiling thro' such lustrous tears
 As angels might, from joy excessive, shed—
 “ Oh, what a Jewel has the world's dark mine
 “ Till now conceal'd from my admiring eye,
 “ Which flings its splendors on me !—Where
 is he,
 “ Whom, *henceforth*, I may love without a crime ?”

ABBAS.

Then so far all is well.—Now, gentle dame !
 'Tis ours to wait the issue of this combat,
 To bless—if he survive, as 'tis my hope

In righteous-judging Heaven, that he will,—
 To bless, I say, our hero with the tidings
 That will delight his bosom more than conquest.

HINDA.

My Friend! and holy Father! how shall I
 Impart *one* portion of his fateful history?
 I tremble but to let it cross my brain,
 Lest Reason fly, with horror, from her throne,
 And leave me—what I sometimes almost wish—
 A mindless maniac!

ABBAS.

Madam! pray be calm.

HINDA.

Oh, who that bears an uncorrupted Conscience
 Within the casket of his inmost breast,
 If he be wise, would barter it away?
 Let wealth,—let worlds become the purchas'd
 price:

Ah what are these devoid of inward peace?
 The world, to him who gains it by Dishonour,
 Is peopled but with furies that will blast him.
 Let fortune smile in courts and palaces,
 Where Royalty is gracious, and each wish
 Is gratified, unutter'd—see him bless'd
 In those, whose blessings most a parent's heart
 Bid thrill with rapture,—still is he a wretch
 That envies the poor beggar at his gate,
 Who all things wants, except a quiet Conscience:
 But having *that*, is wealthier than the king,

Whose conscience is his torment! — I, alas!
 Am such a needy wretch, in midst of plenty!
 'Tis not the sun-shine of a Monarch's favour,—
 No, not e'en such as beams from Persia's king,
 Whose godlike pity for my infant daughter,
 So mov'd him as to wish impos'd on her
 His mother's name, Mandane :— 'tis not now,
 That, bursting, like yon orb that shines upon me,
 Just peering from a cloud—that my blest Son
 Is leaving what conceal'd his splendid merits :—
 It is not e'en the soul-assuaging words
 Of thee, good Abbas! tho' they drop as dew
 On the heat-parched grass, that from that soul
 Can take its perturbation!

ABBAS.

I conjure,
 With all the fervor of my sacred office,—
 By all the pledges of our long-tried friendship,
 That thou wilt pacify thy trembling heart.—
 Proportion'd to thine error has been felt
 The anguish of repentance.

HINDA.

What, tho' deep
 Be that repentance,—can its sorrows wash
 Away the stain of virtual crimson Guilt?
 What tho' the object of my husband's rage
 Provok'd his doom by secret treachery,
 When far away that husband from my bed,
 Was traversing a dangerous clime to earn

The competence he wish'd but for my comfort,—
 Still, ought mine ear from each perfidious wile
 To have, with more fidelity, been turn'd.
 For she who *listens* to a base proposal,
 Has one foot in the gulf, that downward leads
 To Ruin.—True it is, the man who aim'd
 At my Dishonour, fail'd to work his purpose,
 Tho' Death's divorce he forg'd to' accomplish it—
 Feigning; that, in a pestilential clime,
 Arbaces had been sever'd from the world ;
 And almost wetting, with fictitious tears,
 The false credentials of his treacherous guile :
 Yet shou'd I, widow'd, as suppos'd,—aloof
 Have kept the traitor, for Arbaces' sake ;
 Who, having learnt the purpose of the wretch
 He had, with easy faith, believ'd his friend—
 Unheralded by letter, lo ! he came ;
 And, seen by no one,—to confirm the thought
 Of his fir'd Jealousy, he first repair'd
 To where the Mother's cares are chiefly due,
 The nurs'ry,—where his cradled infant slept ;
 An infant, that beheld the light of day
 Visit its eyelids, while its far-off Sire,
 For merchandise, was in a foreign land.
 No mother there, nor his belov'd Mandane,
 Whom 'twas his wish, impatient to caress ;
 But, seeing, swath'd asleep, a new-born babe,
 His frenzied mind imagin'd it the fruit
 Of Guilt,—adulterous Guilt ;—and—Oh, dread
 thought !

He stabb'd it!—Rushing thence, in search of me,
 To share (for so his penitence confess'd)
 The bloody fate, thus dealt my child,—he sought
 A small retir'd apartment, erst his own,
 Where oft-times, too, I tarried, when his cares
 Permitted relaxation. There, it chanced,
 (As if high Heaven so will'd enormous Guilt
 Shou'd meet its penalty and full disclosure)
There found the Culprit at his plotted work,
 With all the documents of his deceit
 Before him; and the same ensanguin'd blade
 Sent, instantaneous, his polluted Soul
 To its sad reckoning. Seizing what he saw—
 These written witnesses—

[she produces some papers]
 he, instant fled,—

'Scaping the vengeance of the kindred-few
 Who mourn'd the murder'd.—Safe from all per-
 suit,

My husband penn'd the epistle thou hast read,
 Fraught with conviction of *my* innocence,
 And *his* remorse, for the inhuman blow
 He dealt his child, whom he believes a victim.
That thought, so harrowing to a father's heart,
 Still haunts him; for he knows not Ahmed lives:
 And may the life, thus sav'd by Providence,
 A blessing prove to Persia!—Wou'd his Sire
Did know the erring mind, and desparate hand
 Had fail'd to work their purpose! *Then*, one
 pang,—

One bitter pang the less were his to feel
In exil'd misery.

ABBAS.

Somewhat I, of this,
Well knew, but not the whole; and much rejoiced
I am, thou hast now fully bar'd thy case,
That I may more console thee. This I can,
By means consistent with my holy calling;
And shortly will embrace a tranquil hour
To make thee happy.

HINDA.

May those means be thine!
And, oh! may He, whose minister thou art,
Be gracious to my present fervid prayer,—
If prayer from such a faulty heart can rise,
Unwing'd by aught that has atoning power,
To His high throne of Mercy; that, forgiv'n
May be my guilt, which brought upon the head
Of worthless Perfidy destruction swift,
And 'reft me of my husband! But, if Heav'n
Erase not from that book, where sin is noted,
Mine own Offence, and it recorded stand
Against me still, Oh, may my Children share
Its pitying smile, and succouring protection!

ABBAS.

Thy pray'r be heard! and may the out-stretch'd
shield
Of Might Supreme defend thy valiant son
In his dread hour of peril!

[*Trumpets sound, at a distance*]

Hark ! that signal

Proclaims its coming ; and we must retire,—
Thou to Mandane,—I to Ahmed's tent,
If time permit the visit.—Be compos'd ;
And bend submissive to the will of Heaven.

[*he leads her forth*]

SCENE 2.

The back Ground wild and mountainous : in the more even front, Cyrus, on a throne, numerously attended by Generals, Nobles, and armed guards :—while, between him and the distance, are beheld, passing on, towards the Plain of Combat, a grand Procession of Soldiery, with martial music, of an inspiriting character, followed by the Champion on horseback, in complete armour,—the Steed richly caparisoned. On his arriving at the centre of the stage, the Procession pauses,—the music ceases,—and the Champion dismounts (leaving the Steed in charge) and, having approached to salute his Sovereign, the latter says :

CYRUS.

Go, my brave friend ! and but remember this—
Thou carriest, on thy spear the Fame of Cyrus.

[*The Champion bows and retires ; and, having re-mounted, the Procession disappears,—the music, by degrees ceasing to be heard : when the king addressing his attendants,—says*]

Your wishes fix me here in idleness,
 When I wou'd gladly, Sirs ! have buckled on
 The mail'd apparel which yon Warrior wears.—
 Him follow to the field ; and see *his* arm
 Achieve, what ev'ry one of *you* wou'd do,
 Selected, as he is, for this great duty.
 Leave me with only the appointed herald ;
 Who, standing *there*, will, from that eminence,
 Proclaim to me the progress of the battle.

(*To the Herald*) [Exeunt]
 Thou know'st thine office : enter on thy post.—

[*He ascends a prepared Elevation, and, looking intently towards the Scene of Combat, remains silent : while the king, in soliloquy, thus continues*]

Some moments are as cyphers,—unimportant—
 Proclaiming nothing but their own departure.
 Not such, O fleeting Time ! the present hour.
 It adds another jewel to my crown,
 Or dims with ignominy those which grace it.
 If this proud Rebel conquer, shorn it lies
 Of all the lustre which it drew from Crœsus ;
 When, with his myriads, on the Lydian plains,
 He hemm'd me in but for his own destruction.
 —Yet something tells me *here*,

[*laying his hand on his breast*]

that my young Champion
 Is rais'd by Him who rais'd me to a throne,
 For Cyrus' Honour, and his Empire's glory.—

[*Taking off his Crown, he reverently lays it on the ground beside him, and says*]

There rest in lowly seeming, while my thoughts Mount, whither shou'd ascend the meditations Of kings and subjects when they are in danger. If thou again, thou shining jewel'd bauble ! My brow encircle with thy golden cares, Cyrus will henceforth, more and more endeavour To make thee bright with Virtues. If—

[*Trumpets sound at a distance*]

HERALD.

My leige !

That is the Signal-Charge. Amidst the plain, (Which is one moving surface) as a field, Vast with unnumber'd acres, ere the grain Assume its ripeness, waves with every breeze,— So, in the midst of such a restless Scene, A wide-extended space, fenc'd round with spears, Now meets my view.—That guarded space is void. No living thing is there : and nought alive Seems emulous to enter ; but aloof Keep animal and man, as if the space Infected were by breath of Pestilence ; While, high aloft, on steady out-stretch'd wing, The vulture sails, nor quits the aerial sphere, But, round and round, pursues her edying flight, As if expectant of some promis'd carnage.

[*Trumpets sound nearer*]

Now, from opposing sides the Warriors bound,

As if shot forth by him that forms the thunder !
 Now do they sudden pause,—each, reining tight
 His fiery courser, brooking ill, restraint,
 While slowly pacing on towards each other,
 Their lords approach ; and, as in amity,
 They cross their spears and pass.—The rebel-
 chief

Bears on his helmet, an expanded eagle,
 Whose golden plumage, in the sunny ray,
 Blazes like liquid fire ! the Monarch's Chief
 Wears, intermingling with a snow-white plume,
 The laurel only, which he recent won,
 And shar'd with good Artaxes.—

[*Trumpets again*]

Now they rush
 Like two conflicting clouds surcharg'd with
 lightning !

And hark ! the dread encounter.—Oh ! alas !
 The spear of Ahmed, by his forceful thrust,
 Against the rebel's corselet, flies to splinters ;
 While rocks the mailed man who felt its power.
 —There ! that was finely done ! another spear
 Wing'd, as if from a bow, meets Ahmed's hand ;
 Who wheels his ready charger instant round,—
 And—now again they close ! alas ! alas !
 By a tremendous thrust, aim'd at his head,
 The helmet of our friend rolls on the plain !
 But he, uninjur'd, has repaid the blow,
 And hurl'd the assailant prostrate to the ground !

While loose and masterless, his courser flies,
 Seeking a wider range of liberty :
 But all in vain the Circle's bound he scours :
 Hemm'd in, on all sides, by the bristling spears.
 Tossing his mane, indignant, high he lifts
 His lordly head, and spurns the dusty soil ;
 While his distended nostrils, red with rage,
 Snort loud defiance, and his eyes flash fire !
 Now Ahmed quits *his* more obedient steed,
 And yields him to a swift-attendant slave,
 Advancing to receive him—Now, great Sir !
 Away he flings the better spear, and draws
 The shining falchion thou hast taught to conquer.
 Away too goes the rebel-spear ! and now,
 Like two chaf'd lions, they renew the fight.
 But oh ! what fearful odds ! The rebel's frame
 Empanoplied from head to foot in steel.—
 And Ahmed helmetless !—Hark ! hark ! the
 blows

Redoubling ring, as if the Cyclops' forge
 Were on the plain !—Oh *that* was nobly dealt !
 Another such a visitor will lay
 The Rebel low !—But no : with fiercer ire,
 He aims his vengeance on the naked head
 Of his young adversary, who turns it by,
 As were the Sword a straw !—He grapples him !
 Fist clenched in fist, that held till now a shield,
 The stronger arm of each is at its work
 To close the deadly fray !—The multitude

Which, late, seem'd as an undulating field
 Of various grain, bent by the breath of Heav'n,
 Is now a scene perturb'd and terrible,
 As when the wild-wav'd Ocean lifts its voice,
 To chide the storm, for waking its vast waters
 From deep repose.

[a shout]

CYRUS.

Herald! what means that shout?
 Oh, I do feel myself unlike a king,
 Here to be 'thron'd in safety, while the storm
 Of battle rages near me on my friend!—

[another shout]

What may that mean? I will break down the
 barrier
 That keeps me here disgrac'd—

HERALD.

Great Sir! retire—
 They hitherward do bring their desp'rate fury,
 As if resolv'd to end it in thy presence.
 The barrier opening, to afford them room,
 Lo! here they rush: yet which will be the victor
 Is only known to Him who judges right.—

*[Another louder shout.—The herald
 is dislodged from his station, by Ahmed
 throwing his antagonist on the Stage,
 at the feet of Cyrus, when, placing his
 left foot on the breast of the vanquished
 man, he says]*

AHMED.

Thy sword surrender ; and retain thy life.—
AZDRIEL, (*being permitted to rise on one knee, says*)

I own thy master-hand,—no common one,
 Or me it wou'd not thus, have prostrate hurl'd
 At his proud footstool, whose despotic sway
 Kindled my enmity. *That* is no more ;
 Nor has it aught of bitterness to thee,
 Whose better fortune has thus tower'd o'er mine.
 —There is my sword :—and, if the Monarch wills,
 Let its next office be to pierce my heart,—
 That, blood, thence flowing, may away the stain
 Wash of my late rebellion.—There ! 'tis thine.

[*tendering his sword to Ahmed*]

AHMED.

Nay not to *me* ; but to the Royal hand,
 That sways the sceptre for his people's weal,—
 Ruling their *Hearts*, and not their abject *fears*,—
 Love, leading to subjection.—

[*Shouts of victory (off the Stage) while the Rebel Chief surrenders his Sword to Cyrus ; who, immediately extending his Sceptre towards him, says*]

CYRUS.

Rise ! pardon'd : but fulfil thy written pledge ;
 Or meet the death thou seemest not to dread.—

[*Cyrus, taking Ahmed by the hand, continues*]

Brave Man ! hence be thou titled Prince of Sardis,
 On whose wide plains thine arm has nobly triumph'd,
 With such a portion of my wealthy empire
 As may befit the title—

[*taking a golden chain from his neck, and encircling with it that of Ahmed, he says]*

This the pledge !

[*Then, addressing the vanquished Chief, he continues*]

Misguided Man ! if thou have trained others
 To acts rebellious, now redress the wrong ;
 And bringing them, like thee, to see their error,
 Cyrus will, as a kind and pitying Father,
 Receive you as his Children—

[*Other Rebel Chiefs here enter*]

FRST CHIEF.

Unask'd,—unsummon'd, lo ! great King of Persia !

We link our fate with his who stands before thee.
 Our lives are forfeit—Take them. They are due
 To thee and Justice. Spare them : and our arms
 Will shew how pardon'd rebels can be grateful.

CYRUS.

Rebels no more :—I hail you Sirs ! as friends :
 For, soon as sleeps the battle—sleeps mine ire ;
 And, instant, 'wakes the wish that I might heal

Each wounded man ; and, if 'twere possible,
Rescue the dying from the grasp of death.

Hafiz ! [calling a Minstrel]

perform thy service, in the way
That is most pleasing to a Soldier's ear.

[*The Minstrel, habited in Character, sings*]

Lead me to battle,—Fortune ! lead ;
Tho' for my Country, there I bleed :
Since he who for his Country dies,
Dies hallow'd ; and his parting sighs
Waft his great spirit to the skies,

In Victory.

Lead, Oh lead me to the foe !
And let mine arm its vengeance throw
On those who wou'd our Monarch harm,—
Banish from Beauty's Cheek its charm,
And fill the land with dire alarm,

By Victory—

Let, to my heart, ye Powers of Heav'n !
Such mingled properties be giv'n,
That, while it pants for arduous fight,
Visions of Glory, pure and bright,
May swim before my raptur'd sight,

Of Victory.

Tho' scorning or to fly or yield,
Let me, as o'er the battle-field,
At Honour's call, I fearless go,
For *Conquest*, not for *Carnage* glow,
And temper'd exultation know

In Victory !

Give me the path of Fame to trace,
 All-uncontrol'd by passions base !
 Oh courage give me, free from ire !
 That, while my fearless Soul's on fire,
 Soft pity may my breast inspire,

In Victory ;—

Pity, for ev'ry vanquish'd foe,
 Who, on the field of blood lies low :
 And, as each gushing wound, I bind,
 Ere my red sword its scabbard find,
 Let vengeance sleep within my mind,

In Victory !—

CYRUS.

Thanks for thy song : which, in its flowing
 numbers,
 Embodied well thy Monarch's thoughts, and those
 Of these brave warriors.—At the festive board
 The laureat-goblet, brimm'd with sparkling
 wine,
 Shall be thy meed :—And, Ahmed ! in thine eye,
 I read thy wish : fulfil it ; and receive,
 In thy late foe-man's undisguis'd embrace,
 An interchange of generous Amity.—

[*They embrace*]

To-morrow's Sun, with its enlivening beams,
 Will rise, I trust, propitious to my purpose ;
 Which is—that, far as tidings can extend
 Of this so bless'd and bloodless termination
 Of civil discord,—they may wing their way,

Bidding my subjects fill the day with joy.
 Nor thou, Artaxes ! be the least delighted :
 Mandane's hand we will unite with thine.—
 Go to thy palace ; and see all prepar'd
 For bride so worthy of its best reception.
 Then let the gentle ear of Her thou lov'st
 Know what is *our* will, and *thy* secret pleasure.

[*Exeunt omnes*]

SCENE 3.

The same as Scene 2, in Act the 3d : that is—a wild Forest,
 with high mountains in the back ground.—The Hermit
 and Zeb, (an African Slave)—the large dog, Rozpar,
 alluded to in Act 3, Scene 2, attending them.

HERMIT.

Thine absence, Zeb, and Rozpar's, on the errand,
 Whither I sent thee, had, well-nigh, my life—
 (Perhaps fast-waning) brought to its conclusion.
 And yet, if present, what cou'd ye have done,
 Against an arm'd Banditti ? Thou and I,
 Despite of Rozpar's courage, might have fall'n
 Their feeble victims. Yea, my faithful Dog !

[*caressing him*]

And thou, too, fighting to defend thy master,
 Had perish'd by his side,—none left, to dig
 Thy grave, and epitaph that tried Fidelity
 Which man but rarely equals.—More of this

Hereafter : for now pressing need demands,
Good Zeb, thy vigilance.—Ascend that rock ;
And note if aught approach, betokening evil.

ZEB.

Me glad bad men not hurt good Massa. Massa
keep Zeb alive. If Massa die, Zeb make a deep
bed, and gather soft leaves to cover him. Then
Zeb lie down and die,—die through his eyes, in
tears. [Shouts at a distance] Hark ! someting
amiss, my Massa ! yonder,—far,—not here : so
never mind. Yet Zeb will watch ; for Massa
bid,—and Zeb obey. He go.

[he departs, the Dog accompanying him;
shouts still heard]

HERMIT, (*solas*)

What Shouts ! and for what cause ? Afar, they
'fright,

Into the deep recesses of the forest,
Each timid denizen, that, till this hour.
Seem'd free from sense of danger. If it come
To *them*, it will, anon, invade my home,
And bid me envy them their agile fleetness.
Yet (no one bending hitherward his feet)
All—and what multitudes ! o'er yonder hills
Troop, as if journeying to some promis'd land
To form a Colony.—Well, let them go :
And let me finish my worn remnant-being,
In this wild Solitude, where human form,
Save that of faithful Zeb, I never wish

To view.—But no : I wou'd the Stranger-Friend,
 Who skreen'd my life, again behold with joy.
 And if his fortunes—as I hope they are—
 Be unconnected with these shouts tumultuous,
 Methinks he will re-trace his sylvan path
 Once more, to bless me.—Soft! I hear the
 tread

Of some one, crackling mid the scatter'd twigs
 Which winds have shaken from the scathed trees.
 I'll enter my rock-dwelling ; and there wait
 The issue of my fear.

[on retiring, he calls to his slave and says]
 Zeb ! where is Rozpar ?

ZEB.

Safe at his post : where, Massa ! is thy servant.
 De meal dat best may please dee, wait thy lip :
 Go, Massa ! pray and take it. All de noise
 Dat shook de forest has gone o'er de mountains :
 And, lo ! de bucks and does, in bounding glad-
 ness,
 Are coming from der coverts to salute dee.

HERMIT.

I will, as thou advisest. Stay thou there :
 And if aught pass, or seem as if approaching,—
 Save, as thou say'st our fellow-foresters,
 Inform me.

ZEB.

Trust to him who ne'er deceiv'd.

[seated on the rock,—Rozpar beside him,

he hums some wild tune ; and, abruptly breaking off, he runs and calls his master]

Massa ! quick ! for some one is not distant.
I hear him speak : and if he speak, it is
To some one like himself.—See ! dere he is !

[*they both retire ; and Ahmed enters, richly attired, but having the same cloak wrapped round him, as when last in the forest*]

AHMED, (*solus*)

Nought will so soon my harrass'd mind restore
To its tranquillity and fitting tone,
As this calm Solitude ; if that be so,
That harbours but the lone and holy man,
Whom late I found, somewhere about this spot.
—Aye, there I sate, to profit by the art
Taught me by him, to whom I owe the worth
Of all I know ;—the good,—the gen'rous Abbas.

[*taking the Drawing out of his Tablet, spoken of in Act 3, Scene 2*]

Here is the rustic Picture : and 'tis like.
But, by what clue I have been guided hither,
To me is mystery. The mazy tracks,
Not made by man, were faint in Memory's eye ;
Yet, like the Star, that guides across the deep
The nightly mariner, they led me right.
There is the rocky dwelling, and the spring
'*that laves its border, simply deck'd with flow'rs :*

And here I see, approaching, the good Sage,
Whom I have sought.—My duty hails thee, Sir.

HERMIT.

I gladly greet thee thus again, my Son!—
To my sequester'd home, I bid thee welcome.
Enter and take the fare that now awaits thee.

AHMED.

I do prefer the canopy of heaven;
Or rather, these wide-branching patriarchs;
Which, had they speech, might tell of centuries
Since they shot forth, young saplings of the soil.
I so admire them, and thy calm retreat,
That, as thou here may'st see, I have purloin'd
them.

HERMIT, (*looking at the Sketch*)

Thou hast been ably tutor'd, I perceive,
In polish'd arts, as well as rougher war.
For, that expertness, in a Soldier's duty,
Is thine, I saw by that determin'd prowess,
Which lately sav'd my life.

AHMED.

For what I boast
In such acquirements, much or all, I owe
To one, who binds me a most grateful debtor.—
The good—the holy Abbas, thro' my life,
Has been, and still to me, Sir, *is* a Father—

HERMIT.

Abbas? saidst thou? What Order does he bear?
And where his station?

[*asked in an agitated manner*]

AHMED.

Order the most honourable,

When, as with him, 'tis honourably fill'd—
Ambassador of Heaven,—to train mankind
For Glory.—Sacred Station too, is his,
High as a Persian Minister's can be,
In minist'ring to Cyrus,—best of kings.

HERMIT, (*still more agitated*)

One favour grant me, and I ask no more.
Unloose the vestment that conceals thy bosom ;
And bare it to my view.

[*Ahmed complies ; and the Hermit, falling on his neck, exclaims*]

Oh ! is it possible ?

My Son ! My Son !

AHMED.

What mean these exclamations,
Strange to my ear, and stranger to my heart ?

[*leading him to the rustic seat*]

Here seat thyself ; and I will sit beside thee,
To hear what may explain this mystery.

HERMIT, (*falling at his feet, embraces them, and sobs passionately, hiding his face*)

The Sire implores forgiveness from the Child !

AHMED.

*My Father ? Thou my Father ? Speak : Oh tell
Me all my dark and unknown history.*

HERMIT.

I will : Cease, cease thy beating, O my heart !

Nor burst with two-fold contrary emotions ;—
 Deep sense of shame and joy,—blood-guilty
 shame,
 Altho' the blood I shed produced, it seems,
 No murder, as I guiltily intended ;—
 And Joy,—Joy boundless ! that the guilty wish,
 Then bred within me by a hellish fiend,
 Was thwarted by high Heaven.—If keen remorse,
 And bitter tears can wash its wrath away,
 Pour'd from a suppliant, desponding soul,
 Heaven is appeas'd. *Its* pardon, and thine own
 Will make me bless'd.

[*Still kneeling, in mental agony*]

AHMED.

My Father ! rise ; Oh rise !
 And bless thy long-lost Son—

HERMIT.

Will blessing, ask'd
 By guilty lips like mine, be shed upon thee ?

AHMED.

It will, my Father ! if implor'd in Truth,
 From *Him* who, gracious, wipes away the tears
 Of contrite, undissembling Penitence.
 Rise, then, and bless me :—bless me, O my
 father !

HERMIT, (*having risen, and laid his left hand on
 Ahmed's shoulder, grasping with the
 other the right hand of his Son, he
 says*)

Lustration, for my lips, if fervent prayer
 Have purchas'd, and them fitted to pronounce it—
 The richest blessing in the stores of Heaven
 Descend upon thee!——I wou'd now divulge,
 With added shame, the Cause, the groundless
 Cause

(As soon I found) of my atrocious aim
 To pluck thee as a flow'r in earliest spring ;
 But now, my heart—too full of sudden joy,
 Forbids the dark disclosure of my Grief.
 Let it then slumber, till again we meet.

AHMED.

Let all, I do intreat, my honour'd Sire !
 Be buried in oblivious non-existence,
 And be as tho' the deed had never been :
 For duty to my Sovereign calls me hence,
 Not suffering more than now my filial arms
 To throw around thee thus, [embracing]
 Farewell ! Farewell !
 Till wake the lark to-morrow.—Cyrus' Camp,
 Whither I go, is distant not far from thee ;
 And the loud shouts, which must have reach'd
 thine ear, [theme,
 Rose from thy Son's bright fortune.—On this
 Some other tongue than mine shall speak hereafter.

HERMIT.

Thou seem'st, by duty, on some great occasion,
 To need refreshment :—take it, Oh my Son !

AHMED.

Thy crystal spring will renovate my spirits,

Which joy has discompos'd. Then, on thy couch
 My hand shall softly lay thee down to rest,
 With sweet anticipations of to-morrow,
 If Heaven permit my visit.

[*The Hermit (Arbaces) fetches water in
 the Conch,—touching it, first, with his
 own lips, and saying*]

HERMIT.

May Heaven bless
 My lov'd,—my late-found Son !

AHMED, (*receiving it from him, says*)

And may its smile

Comfort and cheer my father!—This young arm
 Sir! is thy Stay; and shall, while vigour nerves it,
 Be thy support—

[*Having entered the Hermitage, and
 placed his Father on the couch, he says*

*There!—sweet repose be thine!
 and on seeing Hassan the Bandit,
 whom he thought he had slain, he says*]

But who art thou? Thy face I do remember,
 As one, mark'd by thy mother at thy birth,
 Featur'd for darkest evil: and, unless
 Mine eye deceive me, in the very act
 Of foulest evil, I did lay thee prostrate,—
 To rise, methought, no more.

HERMIT.

My Son! the same:
 But Heav'n to him, as to myself, in mercy,
 Has lengthen'd life, for penitence and virtue.

AHMED.

Well, Penitent!—if such thou art, I greet thee,
 With pity for the wound which thou didst draw,
 On thine own body, from my trusty sword,
 By act of blackest violence;—no less
 Than that of striving to cut short *his* life
 Who gave *me* being.—Hence, bad man! beware,
 If lengthen'd days await thee, to transgress
 No more. Remember these my parting words:
 The Good, tho' not at all times prosperous,
 Are yet the only happy. If in thrall,
 And press'd externally by cruel wrongs,
 They have, within them, *that* which conscious
 Guilt

Is never bless'd with,—a consoling Friend,
 That says, Be patient:—Soon will Heav'n dis-
 perse

The clouds, which on your aching heads pour down
 Their pitiless ire, and will your path, now dark,
 Illumine with unwonted sun-shine,—bright
 As that which gives the gorgeous bow of Grace
 Its beamy colours,—and far brighter still,
 If Heaven ordain (for purpose fathomless)
 Ye may not, on Earth's side of Death, behold it.
 —Farewell.—

[Again affectionately embracing his fa-
 ther, he leaves the hermitage; but, at
 a short distance, he stands still, in a
 thoughtful posture, and says]

Eventful is this passing day!—

Now for a different scene to a still forest,—
 The busy Camp of Cyrus ;—whose Life's morn,
 As told me by himself, resembled mine :—
 Mine, *truly*, far as I can comprehend—
 A pitchy piece of history, o'er which
 Let blank oblivion spread her sable pall !
 I'll hear no more of it, to grieve *my* mind,
 Or harass others. For, why shou'd we aim
 To rake up ashes but to smoulder us ;—
 When we might light a brisk and cheerful fire,
 To make us happy ? Like yon glorious orb,
 That loves not clouds, tho' sometimes they en-
 shroud him,

I wou'd my course pursue uninterrupted,—
 The course of bright beneficence. Full oft,
 Beneath him are the waring elements,—
 Thunder, and hail, and storm,—conflicting dire,
 Heav'n's concave shaking,—and affrighting earth,
 While, grandly, on he steers his tranquil journey,
 Reporting not to other worlds such quarrels :—
 So now, he downward drives his blazing car
 Along th' ethereal plains,—its arrowy beams
 Slanting athwart these moss-invested trees,
 Obstructing but those beams, to make them burst
 The brighter, on the greensward there, beyond
 them.

Such only be the' impediments which rise
 Between me, and the happiness of man !

[*Exit.*]

SCENE 4.

The same as in Act the first, Scene the second, a Garden : but shaded, as at close of day.

Zuleika and Mandane.

ZULEIKA.

Thy *Brother*? Well it is so, dear Mandane !
 For thy betroth'd Artaxes : or methinks
 Thou woud'st have been a Bride without a Heart.
 —Oh ! were I empress of ten thousand realms,
 Ahmed alone shou'd wield the sceptre for me.
 Ne'er did mine eye, that does not idly scan
 Human pretensions, see so fine a mortal.
 I speak not of his *Form*,—but of his *Mind* ;
 For that will ever, in the view of Reason,
 Be the Criterion of human Merit.
 —And yet his *Form*,—of hardier mould than
 thine,—
 Doth seem its counterpart :—thine to be lov'd—
 His—to love nobly whom his Heart espouses.

MANDANE, (*playfully*)

Zuleika ! shall I tell my brother this ?
 For, from my lips, is he the pleasing truth
 First to receive, that we are not more near
 Then dear to one another.—I say so,
 Because thou tell'st me “ he is strangely struck
 With something in thy friend, that binds his
 heart

To seek my good, beyond his very Life.”
 How, in his manly breast, will that heart *bound*,
 When, as a new-found Sister, I embrace him !
 —The hour,—the wish’d,—the pray’d-for hour
 approaches,

When, only the chaste moon beholding us,
 We are to mingle our unspotted loves,
 In that endearing interchange of souls,
 Which lives between a brother and a sister.
That bliss will soon be realiz’d, my friend,
 In the fair scene where now I link mine arm

[*taking her arm*]

With her who, save good Abbas and my mother,
 Alone this secret knows.—Not e’en the Prince
 Who will, to-morrow, lead me to the Altar,
 As our good king (he tells me) has decreed,—
 Suspects it ; nor shall he the secret know,
 Till Ahmed’s self possess it.—At the palace,
 Which henceforth, is to be my seat of comfort,
 Artaxes (so he ween’d it might behove him)
 Doth purpose to beguile away the night,
 That all things may he meet for my reception ;
 And soon as the bright Day Star of the world
 Adorns the east, I may expect my husband.
 Brief will the space be *then*, ere so he claim me.
 Thou, my long-tried, and never-varying friend !
 Wilt, as the bridal Ruler of my toilet,
 Be with me early :—and, till *then*, farewell :—
 For lo ! [*the Moon softly peers over the mountains*]

the signal of my brother's coming,—
Appointed by our sacred friend, and mother.
She shrunk from the disclosure of the secret ;
And *he*, with her approval, fix'd this scene,
At the now-passing hour, for me to speak it.

ZULEIKA.

Along with me, my gentle friend ! to seek
Some sheltering raiment, to protect thy frame
From the damp nightly dews : or shall my feet,
With their accustom'd promptitude retire,
And bring thee what is needed—

MANDANE.

I will with thee.
[*Exeunt*]

SCENE 5.

Unchanged ; except the Moon gradually rising higher ; and
a Shepherd's lute heard at a distance, mingling with the
song of the Nightingale.

AHMED, (*solas*)

This is the appointed spot : and one more lovely
Ne'er bloom'd on this side Eden. Nor, to *sight*
Alone, is all enchanting :—hark ! the *ear*
May feel the magic charm.—How sweet the
sounds
Of Music, when the winds are hush'd in sleep !
At this still hour, when, with unsandal'd foot,
Silence steps lightly o'er the mossy lawn,

Not 'void of charm is simplest minstrelsy.—
For, hark ! the Shepherd's pipe, in concert joins
With the sweet queen of song.—Was what I
heard

Mandane's dulcet voice, or was it Echo's?—
'Twas the shy nymph's that whispers from her
cave

Sounds, floating softly thro' the dewy air ;
But whose aerial form was never seen.
And yet the hour is now : for *there*

[*pointing to the Moon*]
the Sign

Beams brightly on me.—Sure, like thee, fair
Moon!

Mandane is not varying in her purpose ;
Since not for *Love* we meet, but " for some duty,
To solace m and others."—Those the terms,
Good Abbas uses, in this written message.—

[*taking a paper from his vest*]

Is't something appertaining to my Father,
And to myself, that such a minister
(As if lent from the skies for this bless'd purpose)
Doth seek a scene and time so sanctified,
To try a Soldier's Honour ?—Lo ! she comes :
Or is it some bright angel 'mid the flow'rs
That moves them with its presence ?—It is she !

[*approaching her, and taking her hand*]

Mandane ! had I not been waiting *thee*,
I shou'd have deem'd this solitude a pleasure,
It seems what ancient Seers have finely pictur'd

Of the primeval Garden ; where abode,
 While its possessors *merited* such bliss,
 Perfect felicity. For, here are charms,
 Especially since thou art come among them,
 Enough to make me deem myself immortal.
 —But Lady ! namings, warm as thus my heart
 Prompts me to use, I must forbear, and ask,
 With all a man's solicitude, who owns
 Greatly himself thy debtor—what kind deed
 I may perform to serve thee.—See !

[*exhibiting the Laurel*]
thy Gift

Has not yet faded : and when fade it doth—
 As Beauty's self, in thy fair form, will fade—
 Treasur'd will this remain, while it endure :
 And when it perishes, as all things must,
 That have an earthly origin—e'en *then*,
 In *Memory* it will live till that decays,—
 A trophy, owing all its worth to thee.

MANDANE.

Such courtly language might from Lover's lips,
 Delight his youthful Mistress. Yet, pray say,
 How is it, that, professing thus to prize
 The trophy which my trembling hand bestow'd,
 Thou dost retain but *half* of what I gave thee ?
 The other half—so busy Fame reports—
 Thou hast imparted to thy friend Artaxes.—

[*spoken jestingly*]

Well: one less worthy, Ahmed might have found
 To share a treasure that is deem'd of value :

—I call thee *Ahmed*—thy *untitled Name*,—
 Altho', deservedly, thou'rt now a Prince,—
 Braver, there breathes not one, in Persia's realms :
 —I said, I call thee by thy *wonted name* ;
 Because the ties of honest *kindred Nature*
 Claim frankness, as the prov'd abiding test
 Of true sincerity.—Say, did thine ear, [Carol,
 That caught, ere while, the night-bird's dulcet
 Note the plain phrase I have this moment utter'd?

AHMED.

Lady ! It did.

MANDANE.

Nay, Ahmed ! it cou'd *not*,—
 Or, sure, the coldly-formal term of “Lady,”
 Wou'd not, by thee, be spoken, in the sequence.
 —Did I not talk of honest *kindred ties*,
 As now subsisting in my yearning bosom ?

AHMED.

Thou didst.

MANDANE.

Then call me, now, *Mandane*—SISTER !

[she throws her arms round his neck, and weeps in rapture : while he, in a very impassioned manner, affectionately kisses her : when Artaxes, unperceived by them, enters.—they retire to a Garden Seat, as if in earnest endearing conversation, her arm over his shoulder, and he occasionally saluting her,—as, under like circumstances, a brother would a sister]

ARTAXES, (*in a subdued indignant tone, unheard by them, says*)

Oh ! what a scene does hell unfold before me !
Hither I came, expecting to be bless'd,—
And curse, more fell than death, alights upon me !

[*then rushing suddenly upon them,—addressing Ahmed, he exclaims*]

Thou trait'rous foe, in the disguise of Friendship !
Thou Serpent ! winding round my heedless feet,
Only, with poisonous sting, to wound my peace !
Or if there be another epithet
More hateful to thine ear,—by that I call thee—
Villain !—and if thy recreant life be worth
Preserving, save it, or thy dastard soul
Shall instant find a passage, from my Sword
To hell's dark caverns.—Treach'rous Villain !
draw ;—

AHMED.

Thy bidding is obey'd ; not *thee* to harm,
But to defend *myself*.

MANDANE.

Rash man ! forbear,—

[*rushing, to throw herself between them, she faints and falls,—Artaxes furiously assails Ahmed ; who, acting defensively, soon disarms him, and says*]

AHMED.

Prince ! take thy weapon, stainless of the blood
Thou woud'st have shed ; and henceforth use it
only

Against thy Country's foes. I am its friend ;
 Nor friendly less to *thee*.—Soon shalt thou know
 Thine error ; but not now : for lo ! the wreck,
 The lovely wreck, thy wayward rage has made !

[he tenderly approaches Mandane, still lying in a state of insensibility, and, affectionately taking her hand, he kisses it]

Fair tranced Saint ! if yet in this base world
 Thou sojournest, awake !—awake, Mandane !
 Not as thy gentle and susceptive soul
 Erewhile surmis'd—to bloody strife and death ;
 But rise,—awake to pleasure.

[Artaxes, frantic with Jealousy, draws a poniard from his vest, and stabs Ahmed in the bosom ; who staggers and falls at some little distance behind Mandane, who still remains insensible]

AHMED.

That was foul ;

And not accordant with thy wonted bearing :
 Yet done in *error*, blinded by mistrust,
I do forgive thee, Prince, as in His sight
 (All purity) the spirit thou dislodgest
 Hopes soon to find forgiveness.—Unprepar'd
 For exit into dread Eternity,
 Unlaver'd by repentance of its Sins
 (For who that has not sinned ?) to the weight
 Of mine, be thine not added !—

[*a cloud now, by degrees, begins to envelop the Moon*]

Flitting Spirit !

Stay but a little while :—and thou, my slayer !
 Atone thus far, for the enormous wrong,
 By aiding my fast-ebbing frame to clasp
 Once more within its dying arms a Treasure,
 No sooner found than lost—Grant that my lips,
 With their last kiss, may call her back to being :
 And yet 'twere well, if she awake no more !—

[*Artaxes remains motionless and confounded*]

What ! not *that* boon ? I wou'd have dealt it
thee.—

—Aid me, then, failing limbs !—for, while thro' you,
 Flows kindred blood, a kindred feeling claims
 Endearment.

[*he attempts painfully to drag on towards
 her, but sinks exhausted, exclaiming*]

O my Sister ! lov'd Mandane !

[*uttering a deep groan, he dies*]

MANDANE, (*reviving, and looking wildly at
 Artaxes, says*)

What groan was *that*, as from a sepulchre,
 Issuing to wake, by cost of its last sigh.
 My 'frighted spirit from its death-like sleep,
 To strangely-troubled life ?

[*not seeing the body of her Brother ; but
 observing Artaxes statued with horror,
 she says*]

Artaxes ! whither,
 Since last I saw thee, have I been translated ?
 A world of dreary shadows—sunless, dark—
 Has kept me from thee, till, methinks all-chang'd
 Art thou become, and frightful,—not as erst,
 Gentle and comely, like the summer-sun,
 Rising above the hills, and shedding joy
 With light o'er all beneath him.—When eclips'd,
 Alarming all who look on his black Orb,
 With dread of some portentous visitation,
 He seems as thee.—What horrible magician
 Has thus transform'd thy nature and appearance ?
 Speak, I entreat thee : for thy rolling eye,
 Late like the dove's, when viewing his fond mate,
 Now flashes terror ! and thy furrow'd brow,
 Late like the watery mirror, o'er whose breast,
 When winds are sleeping in the sultry noon,
 The margin-trees hang gracefully their heads,
 To see themselves reflected—that high brow,
 Suffus'd with feverish drops, and ridg'd with
 frowns,
 Is render'd hideous!—Tell me of my Brother,—
 Destin'd, I ween'd, to be *thy* Brother too.
 Where is he ?—Speak : Oh speak, I do conjure
 thee !
 For Silence—(Silence, only of thy tongue—
 All else is eloquent, and tells of horror)
 Is more tremendous to my anguish'd bosom,
 Than wou'd the doom be, from an angry judge,

that were to end my being! —— Silent still?
 And motionless of foot, as if the wand
 Of some fell Sorcerer, in his cursed spell,
 Had bound thee fast? — Then I will come to thee;
 And with my tears, dissolve the strange enchant-
 ment.

[She rises to go towards him : when, per-
 ceiving the bleeding body of her Brother,
 she shrieks,—faints, and falls upon it—
 the Moon becoming now totally enveloped—Artaxes, re-clutching the dagger,
 with which he had slain Ahmed, stabs
 himself, and falls, embracing Mandane
 and his injured Friend. In the mean
 while, the Curtain slowly descends, and
 the Drama closes]

ERRATA.

PAGE.

- ix, middle line, dele the s in judgments
- 28, 7th line, substitute reverend, for revered
- 30, 17th line, His for this
- 48, 9th line, dele the comma after looks
- 92, 10th line, Mothers' for Mother's
- ib, 16th line, veracity, for integrity
- 104, a comma, for a period, after claims,
- 105, 8th line, from bottom, Is for Are
- 118, middle line, bosom, for breast
- 119, purchase-price, for purchas'd
- 125, middle line, eipher, for cypher
- 132, 5th line, a ! wanted, after Fortune !

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